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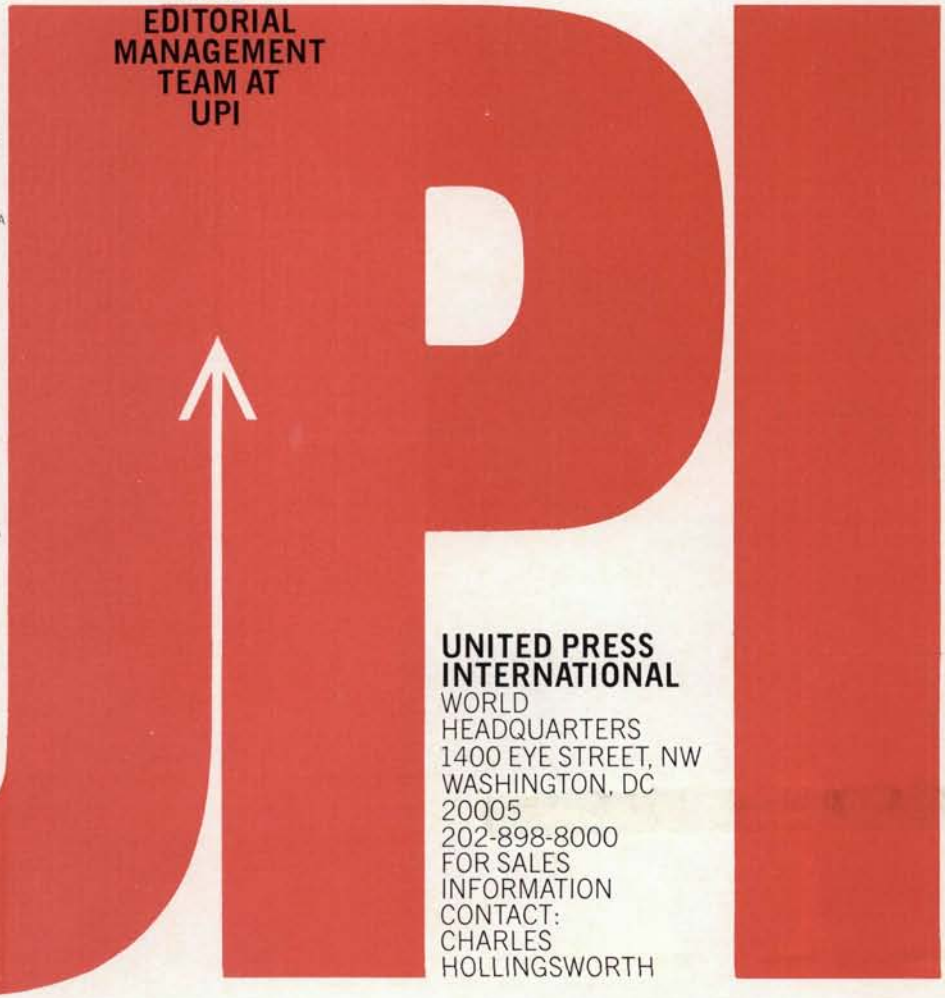

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4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... HOSTAGE TO INNOCENCE
Our troubling outrage about the kidnapped.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... On Carter's comeback, Catholic camaraderie, &c.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... THE LEARNING CURVE
Democrats teach Reagan about education.
ON THE BEACH
Jesse Jackson's misguided racial message.
CALLING KING SOLOMON
The solution to the Baby M struggle.
NOTEBOOK
$10,000 for scrambled eggs?

9 **CHARLES PAUL FREUND** ..... THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

10 **FRED BARNES** ..... WHITE HOUSE WATCH: SPACE RACE
How the right changed Reagan's mind about SDI.

12 **ROBERT BAZELL** ..... SCIENCE AND SOCIETY: CATCHING UP TO AIDS
The case for aggressive testing.

14 **JEFFREY L. PASLEY** ..... THE PRESS: INSIDE DOPES
What did the columnists know about Iranamok, and when did they know it?

16 **MORTON KONDRACKE** ..... THE MACHINE AND THE TIGER
Mexico has one powerful political party, and one more chance to make its revolution work.

21 **ROBERT KUTTNER** ..... FAT AND SASSY
Republicans stay on top with pollster Richard Wirthlin's well-funded, high-tech spin control.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: BACKWARD LOOKS
84 Charing Cross Road and *Filming Othello.*

25 **JANET MASLIN** ..... TELEVISION: SITUATION COMMIE
ABC's Moscow on the Platte.

27 **SIMON SCHAMA** ..... SCRATCH 'N' SNIFF
The Foul and the Fragrant by Alain Corbin
Perfume by Patrick Süskind

31 **ALFRED KAZIN** ..... TOTEM AND TABOO IN TERRE HAUTE
Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City by Richard Lingeman

33 **DONALD L. HOROWITZ** ..... A SPLITTING HEADACHE
Relative Merits: A Personal View of the Bandaranaike Family of Sri Lanka by Yasmine Gooneratne
Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy by S. J. Tambiah
The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka by Mick Moore

38 **WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD** ..... AUSSIE ODDITIES
The Well by Elizabeth Jolley

40 **ROBERT PINSKY** ..... POEM *The Hearts*

42 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... DEAR EDITOR, DEAR READER

COVER "Call of the Revolution" by Rufino Tamayo (1935). Article on page 16.

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

HOSTAGE TO INNOCENCE

TRB is on vacation. This column was written by Ronald Steel.

We feel sorry for the hostages in Lebanon. We see their photos on TV, listen to the entreaties of their families, and imagine ourselves in their place. Why should they—simple Americans going about their business—be picked upon and victimized? This cannot be allowed to happen, we think. They must be set free, and, if possible, their tormentors punished.

Here, in effect, we have the Ronald Reagan syndrome. A wrong has been committed against an innocent. A member of the clan has been abducted. Whatever price necessary must be paid to secure his return.

This reasoning, however touching, reveals a deep-seated sentimentality, and a troubling naïveté about how the world works. It is rooted in a national experience and a national mythology of the frontier, in which brave settlers trek off into the unknown, where they are endangered by warlike savages. It is the stuff of every Hollywood Western, including what may be the greatest of them all: John Ford's *The Searchers*, in which a man becomes the victim of his obsessive quest for a girl abducted by Indians.

It is a reasoning reinforced by the teachings of American Protestant evangelism, which decrees that believers have a duty to convert non-believers to the true faith. This missionary experience justified the dispatch of generations of American preachers into distant lands on self-defined godly missions, an intrusion into the lives of people who never sought our presence. We went there for their own good.

Finally, the law of triumphant return of the innocent prisoner is dictated by the incessant pounding of the media, particularly television, which finds an irresistible human drama in the plight of the hapless captive. TV is entertainment. Hostages are good theater. Yet there are many innocent Americans who suffer undeservedly: the homeless, those stricken by AIDS, and the victims of crime.

The American media, for all their relentless trivialization, do not create the demands of their audience. They reflect them. Why have the German media not treated the capture of two German businessmen in Lebanon with the same breathless urgency that the American media treat United States hostages? Are the Germans more cynical and coldhearted? Are their media less trivial? Or are they more realistic about the dangers a country runs when charging into other people's politics?

Our national optimism and impetuosity are among our most charming qualities. But there is a price to be paid for barging in so blithely where others hesitate to tread. That price is accountability, and it is one we are loath to pay. We imagine that we can wink at Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and provide it with the matériel to fight its wars, and not be considered a co-belligerent by many Lebanese. We assume that we can send the Marines to Beirut to take sides in a civil war, and bombard Lebanese villages from safely distant battleships, and not be held responsible by those who equate us with their enemies.

There may be good reasons to involve ourselves in other people's civil quarrels, to take sides in regional balance-of-power struggles, to topple governments we don't like and assist those we do. But none of this can be done under the illusion that American citizens can remain aloof from responsibility and blameless for the course of events our government is influencing.

We are so obsessed with hostages because we see them, like ourselves, as innocents. Like Eugene Hasenfus, a soldier of fortune who on being captured protested that he was simply trying to provide for his family back in Wisconsin, we believe that we are innocent so long as our hearts are pure. We are inclined to consider Hasenfus, or Sam Hall, another soldier of fortune, or William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Lebanon who was kidnapped and later murdered, as hostages rather than prisoners of war, as though they were innocents like the passengers aboard the *Achille Lauro* or the hijacked TWA airliner.

We cannot dismiss such accusations merely by avowing our own good intentions. If you make possible an event that could not otherwise take place, you are usually, in the eyes of the law, held responsible for the consequences. The driver of a getaway car in a bank robbery, for example, is just as liable as the gunman for a murder committed in the course of the holdup. To say that the driver personally meant no harm is an insufficient, even a naive, defense.

Today, after 40 years of global involvement in other people's quarrels, and a century of intervention in Central America, we can still be shocked that others see us as the enemy. We want to order the world our way—but not to be held personally responsible by those against whom we apply our power. We seek the benefits of imperialism while hoping to enjoy all the conveniences of pacifism.

If there is something endearing in our outraged innocence, there is also much that is disturbing about it. The Americans who have chosen to remain in Lebanon—some working for the United States government, others trying to make a buck, and still others hoping to do good works—are hostages to our own foreign policy. If we want to play the traditional great power games in the Middle East and elsewhere, we cannot expect to insist on rules that suit us best.

So far we have been able to avoid payment in other areas, such as Central America. There we seek to overthrow a Nicaraguan government we find distasteful by supporting the *contras*, whose actions we would describe, in another context, as terrorism. Indeed, one of the ironies of the Iran-*contra* scandal is that we have been secretly arming a government that seizes our citizens as hostages while conducting a proxy war against one that obligingly returns our prisoners of war.

We long ago stopped behaving like innocents abroad. It is time we stopped thinking that way.

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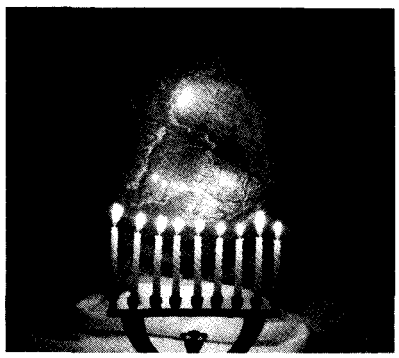
-*Isaiah*



A great tradition of generosity toward poverty and pain stems from words such as these. It is in that spirit that The American Jewish World Service has been founded. Our purpose: To bring renewal and development to places where suffering is as predictable as noonday heat and early death is as common as the dirt under one's feet. Through the work of The American Jewish World Service, Jews can be a positive presence in the far corners of the earth. We are the first American Jewish organization devoted to nondenominational international aid and development.

RECONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA
A volcanic eruption destroyed the town of Armero and killed 22,000 inhabitants. The American Jewish World Service sponsors a project which employs 140 survivors to manufacture 10,000 bricks a day to reconstruct their town on a new, safe site.

SAVING GRAIN IN THE THIRD WORLD
25% to 30% of all harvested grain is lost because of an inadequate storage system. With our assistance, The Israeli Mobile Plastic Silo is being placed in Sri Lanka now and could vastly increase world food yield.

SAVING CHILDREN IN MEXICO
Forty children orphaned by earthquake are being cared for in a "Children's Village" which AJWS is constructing near Mexico City.

Now: A crisis has developed in the Philippine island of Negros.

THE PROBLEM: The feudal sugar industry has collapsed. More than 400,000 sugar workers are out of work with no way to feed their families. Protein calorie malnutrition is a daily threat on the island—especially among children.

Susan Meiselas/Magnum Photos

THE HOPE: The land on Negros is rich and being made available to people eager to work. What is needed are seed, tools and retraining for the planting of rice and corn.

Outside aid is essential to save the children of Negros in this emergency.

The American Jewish World Service as a moral and practical arm of the Jewish and American conscience is here to stay.

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CORRESPONDENCE

CARTER'S COMEBACK

To the editors:
As something of a Carter fan, I was pleased to learn of his "return." However, Jeffrey L. Pasley and Adam Paul Weisman fail to deliver the real moral of the story ("He's Back!" January 19). Carter, the details man, was able to think critically about a situation, whereas Reagan is limited by his anecdotal imagination. Carter recognized that real action has real costs that people, even Americans, have to pay. He made no real effort to conceal these costs. This enabled him to formulate realistic policies for the problems America faced. As Pasley and Weisman point out, many of these actions eventually proved effective, and Reagan reaped the benefits. But to his own successor, Reagan will bequeath a necklace of millstones and a nation now unaccustomed to the price of lunch. The lesson to be learned here: one does not live by spirit alone; you need the bread as well. And to make bread requires more than just the warm feeling generated by hot air.

MICHAEL SVOBODA
State College, Pennsylvania

'BELOVED BROTHERS'

To the editors:
"The Cardinal Goes Calling" (January 19), an exercise in name-calling against Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, does not provide a very auspicious beginning for the new year.

What is the pope's attitude toward the State of Israel? In his Apostolic Letter, *Redemptionis Anno* (April 1984), he stated: "For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel . . . we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society." Regarding Judaism, the pope said during his historic visit to Rome's Chief Synagogue that "the Jewish religion is not 'extrinsic' to us, but in a certain way is 'intrinsic' to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers."

TNR has misinterpreted a *diplomatic* disagreement between the Vatican City State and the State of Israel as evoking "the historical hatred of the Church for the Jews," a phrase that in itself vastly oversimplifies a far more complex set of historical issues.

EUGENE J. FISHER
Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:
It is not a mere diplomatic disagreement that keeps the Vatican from recognizing the existence of Israel. It is the fact that the very existence of Israel challenges a central tenet of Church theology.

EDMUND WILSON V. THE MLA

To the editors:
James Atlas ("MIA at the MLA," January 26) tells us that the MLA "has never quite recovered from Edmund Wilson's devastating attack on its prissy methods and editing procedures in the *New York Review of Books* some 20 years ago." His characterization of Wilson's attack as "devastating" prompts me to wonder how much of the incident he recalls.

Wilson's *NYRB* article was provoked by an NEH grant of which Wilson disapproved. The NEH elected to subsidize an MLA project: the restoration, from original manuscripts, of the texts of classic American authors, from Poe to Crane. Wilson was displeased by the grant because he saw it (erroneously) as competing with, and displacing, a project of his own: the republication, in a uniform format, of the same authors, though without benefit of textual purification.

This was the origin of Wilson's outburst. Those who mistake textual collation for "obsessive pedantry" found the article wonderfully witty. Those who knew something about the work he was denigrating found it an exercise in bilious and petty ignorance. What Wilson condemned as pedantic tatting was in all cases valuable, in some cases essential. The restoration of texts to the authors' "original intention" is tedious and meticulous labor; but it is far from prissy or pedantic.

Some years ago a magazine, now defunct, asked me to report on the Wilson-MLA controversy. I started without bias—indeed, with a presumption in favor of Wilson, whom then as now I greatly admired. But I soon reached the conclusion stated above. The great Edmund Wilson was talking through his hat. I wrote to ask him if he had reconsidered, and received one of his famous one-word responses: No. He died soon thereafter, still, so far as I know, impenitent.

EDWIN M. YODER JR.
Alexandria, Virginia

THE CASE FOR INDIFFERENCE

To the editors:
TRB is gleeful and asks us to laugh ("The Case for Glee," December 22). Morton Kondracke is mournful and asks us to cry ("The Case Against Glee," January 26). What is going on here? What is the big deal about Iranamok?

This is a scandal, a *crisis*, but it's not Watergate. Watergate was motivated in large part by personal and selfish reasons; it involved activities so clearly illegal that at times they even violated the Ten Commandments. The perpetrators could never pretend their efforts were in the public interest. But finally, the president *fooled* us.

In our present case, there are no surprises. Those of us who think that these events only serve to illustrate Reagan's lack of competence and his distance from reality have thought that much of him all along. We are excited only at the opportunity to say, "See! See! I told you so!" No one has been enlightened here. Repeat after me: ho hum.

ERIC J. EVANS
Boston, Massachusetts

BEAR IN MIND

To the editors:
"Listen to this, sweetie," I said to my beloved this morning. "Carl Degler says that 'childbirth is one of the two incontrovertible differences between men and women. (The other is lactation.)' " ("Birth in the U.S.A.," January 19.)

"Weird!" he *ejaculated*, continuing to shave his *beard* and follow the radio report on President Reagan's *prostate* operation. Fortunately, I'm one of those women who feels rather cheerful when she gets her *period*, although I hope to be *pregnant* one of these days. So I just kept looking for a clean *brassiere*.

In fact, I felt pretty good. Because I always thought that the main incontrovertible difference between men and women was that men get to write nineteen-twentieths of the articles in THE NEW REPUBLIC.

KATHA POLLITT
New York, New York

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
FEBRUARY 23, 1987

THE LEARNING CURVE

National politicians and professional ideologues are once again kicking around education funding like a football. The Reagan administration was casting about for some State of the Union themes that might buff up its tawdry image and came up with double buzzwords: "excellence through competitiveness." The president said, "We must demand more of ourselves and our children by raising literacy levels dramatically by the year 2000. Our children should master the basic concepts of math and science." There was no program to match the words; it was simply an exhortation on behalf of excellence.

In the Democratic rebuttal, House Speaker Jim Wright played the opposite side of the politician's game, making quality education seem entirely a matter of federal funding. "President Reagan spoke of education tonight in glowing terms, but the sad truth is that his budget . . . would actually cut our educational commitment by about 28 percent." If the Republicans think they can improve American education with rhetoric, the Democrats think they can do it with federal dollars. Now that they are fully in control of Congress again, the Democrats apparently are getting ready to do for education what Caspar Weinberger once did for defense: take all the old numbers and raise them. "There is definitely a sense that the good times are back again," a staffer on the House Education and Labor Committee told *Congressional Quarterly*.

On the ideological front, conservatives are citing the fact that between 1960 and 1980, when national spending on education went from $16 billion to $96 billion, SAT scores plunged by 90 points, and are using it to try and prove that increased spending *caused* the SAT decline. And, they imply, since federal spending leveled off during the Reagan years and SAT scores gained back 16 points, there's more proof that stinginess is good for the schoolhouse. The Japanese, they point out, spend 5.7 percent of GNP on education, whereas we spend 6.7 percent. Liberals, on the other hand, know that there is much work to be done—to close the trade deficit, retrain workers, combat illiteracy, produce as many engineers as the Japanese do, fight drugs, and lower the dropout rate—and federal funding is their way of showing commitment.

The truth about American education is that money counts, as do standards, discipline, high expectations, and homework. If American education is coming back after its decline in the 1960s and '70s, starvation isn't responsible. Although the Reagan administration has been trying to cut federal education funding, the very same governors whom the administration praises for raising standards—Chuck Robb of Virginia, Jim Hunt of North Carolina, Bob Graham of Florida, Bill Clinton of Arkansas, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, and Tom Kean of New Jersey—also have been increasing teacher salaries and overall funding for education. Teacher salaries, no thanks to President Reagan, have increased by 14 percent since 1981, to an average of $25,313, which still isn't good enough. Overall national spending on education has gone up 15 percent during the Reagan years, thanks mainly to state and local efforts.

Education Secretary William Bennett has been a champion of higher standards, but he is now forced again to defend budget cuts—this year, a proposed $5.5 billion, mainly from programs to aid college students. Even he doesn't truly believe that cuts are good in and of themselves. The president's education budget was cut to comply with the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction plan, although the administration knew full well that Congress would restore the school funds and get back the money from defense. Bennett himself fought the Office of Management and Budget over its plan to eliminate Pell grants for the lowest-income college students, and won. He is also recommending increased funding for low-income elementary and secondary education, with incentives for monitoring performance.

Bennett has argued often and well that colleges and universities have taken advantage of increases in student aid funding to raise their fees. They've behaved much as defense contractors did with Weinberger's defense budget and as doctors have with Medicare. But to cut back on Pell grants isn't the answer; the neediest students still need the money. Another item in Bennett's budget is an answer for less needy students: substantially replacing the much-abused Guaranteed Student Loan program with income-

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contingent loans, repayable over time after graduation and according to the graduate's earning power. Bennett recommended $600 million for the income-contingent program in 1988, but there are ways that Congress can improve the program to make it truly equitable and opportunity-creating.

As proposed in various forms by Representative Thomas Petri of Wisconsin, Boston University President John Silber, Denis P. Doyle of the Hudson Institute, and others, the Social Security trust fund could provide seed money for a student-loan revolving fund, to be repaid by graduates through the Internal Revenue Service. Graduates with low incomes—teachers, for example—would pay back less than they borrowed, and those with high incomes would pay back more. Payments could be deferred until several years after graduation, until a time when the graduates begin reaching their full earning potential. Defaults, presently ten percent under existing loan programs, should be down; the IRS would know where to find people.

Among Democrats, presidential candidate Gary Hart has laid out a meticulous agenda for improving education. He wants to spend $17 billion over three years on such programs as increasing teacher pay, a national corps of volunteers to teach illiterates, evening adult learning centers in community facilities, worker retraining institutes, graduation of more scientists and engineers, increased foreign language instruction, and investment in research. Hart is breaking the Democratic mold by advocating not simply more money, but teacher testing, firing of unqualified teachers, more homework, close supervision of beginning teachers, and greater parental say in and choice of schools. Some Republicans think that Hart has shrewdly designed his program to elicit opposition from the National Education Association and other pillars of the education establishment, and thereby demonstrate his independence from Democratic interest groups. We say, fine.

If there's a flaw in Hart's agenda, it's an absence of priorities—a must until the Reagan deficits are brought under control. We think the top priority for spending ought to be math and science education, which affects America's ability to compete in international commerce. American schoolchildren receive far less math and science instruction than Japanese children, and often they are taught by semiqualified teachers. A shortage of teachers exists because private industry can offer significantly higher pay than school systems. In the past, the schools have found ways to pay sports coaches extra money, but otherwise it's not been possible to differentiate among teachers according to their fields. That pattern needs to be reversed by raising the pay for math and science teachers to whatever level it takes to adequately staff the schools and educate the kids.

Next in line, the United States ought to raise teacher salaries generally and deregulate education so that persons other than graduates of teachers colleges can enter the teaching field. A starting salary of $17,000, the national average, is bound to attract young people with an average combined SAT score of 820 (the figure for college-bound high school students declaring education as their likely profession). If we want better education, we will have to spend more. And we will have to demand more from teachers and pupils. Parents, citizens, and governors are pretty clear on this. Why can't Washington politicians just agree to stop pretending it's any other way?

On The Beach

In the wake of the Howard Beach trauma, many people have been accused of lacking sensitivity to the fears of American blacks, of attempting to dodge the cold truth about the incompleteness of the revolution in American race relations. And there have been such dodgers. It was recently argued on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* that "of course, the killers of Howard Beach must be punished," but that the real problems facing American society are "plant closings that happen without prior notice . . . economic royalism while thousands of workers lose their jobs . . . factories fleeing to Third World countries . . . sex and race discrimination in the workplace," and so on. Although there is a great deal of truth in this perspective, black people would be right if they saw in such lofty generalizations a diversion of public interest from the immediate problems that many of them face.

Yet those words were written by Jesse Jackson. Imagine his response if any white politician or intellectual had repaired to such demagoguery in the wake of Michael Griffith's murder. He opines that "the White House is more segregated than Howard Beach," because a chair could not be found for Charles Rangel during a White House meeting on drugs. No doubt a chair could have been found. But is Rangel standing in the White House corridor really worse than Griffith lying on Shore Parkway? Similarly, "Dr. King's dream is closer to reality in Queens than on Wall Street." The homiletic ease with which Jackson appropriates the Howard Beach horror for his own purpose is really quite breathtaking. He also speaks up once again for the Jews who were offended by Ronald Reagan's trip to Bitburg. We are tired of hearing about the Holocaust from the man who said that he was tired of hearing about the Holocaust.

It is always easier to rail against a system than to fix it, and more satisfying to resort to radicalism when the fever is already high. The secret of Jackson's appeal, however, is that he uses the rhetoric of unity to divide. In a recent profile of Jackson in the *Washington Post* magazine, he is referred to as "the President of Black America." Perhaps that is how he sees himself, too. It is a repugnant but revealing epithet. There are blacks in America, but there is no such thing as Black America, at least of the kind that has its own president. This society has been splintered, manipulated, and deceived quite enough by ethnicity and racial passion and the politics of single-issue groups. What it lacks now is common ground. All his talk about "coalition" notwithstanding, common ground is precisely what Jesse Jackson does not want blacks to have with whites. The politics of polarization, which usually comes raw and ugly, has never been delivered so smoothly.

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Calling King Solomon

Everyone wants a Solomonic decision in the vexed Baby M case now being tried in the State Superior Court of New Jersey. In fact, Harvey R. Sorkow, the presiding judge, could do worse than to take the biblical cliché literally as he turns this week to the second phase of the dispute over the surrogate motherhood agreement between Mary Beth Whitehead and William Stern.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, lawyers, and friends are now lining up to testify to the comparative merits of each parent as the judge contemplates the question of who should get custody of the baby born of Mr. Stern's sperm and Mrs. Whitehead's egg and body. Much of the evidence was aired in the first stage of the trial, which focused on the validity of the contract they signed. The court records have been open, and the media have offered portraits, profiles, and opinions of the mother who changed her mind about giving up her baby girl and of the father who still wants his daughter. The current hearings are expected to go on for weeks. But if King Solomon were presiding, he would already have heard all he needed to know.

In his first, famous case, the king resolved a dispute between two harlots over one baby by calling for a sword and proposing to cut the infant in half. The woman who pleaded for mercy and urged him to give the baby to the other was herself awarded the child by the wise king. No one, of course, is proposing to slice Baby M in two, but she's already divided: she's Melissa for the Sterns, Sara for the Whiteheads. By the king's reasoning, she belongs with whichever parent would relinquish the baby rather than perpetuate that split. To countenance a radically divided life for the child is a disqualification for parenthood.

Both parties to the suit have made their inclinations known. "I'm just a mother who wants her child," Mrs. Whitehead said in January: "I don't care what they do. I will not surrender my child." Sara will not become a silent snapshot in her photo album. But Mr. Stern is prepared to let Melissa become a memory if he loses the custody case: "I'd prefer she just not know about me. . . . For her to see

The Zeitgeist Checklist

By Charles Paul Freund

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	**STANDING SMALL**	3	2
2.	**BEING THERE**	1	2
3.	**IF I ONLY HAD A BRAIN**	2	14
4.	**MIND YOUR BUSINESS**	4	5
5.	**'ROO THE DAY**	10	2
6.	**RUSSIAN AHEAD**	7	5
7.	**THROUGH THE SPYGLASS**	—	1
8.	**COUP D'TAPE**	—	1
9.	**CROSSOVER MUSIC**	*	4
10.	**GIRLS WHO TARRY DO MARRY**	—	1

1. STANDING SMALL

Competitiveness. "We're-Number-One!" Reaganite breast-beating is suddenly giving way to a focus on culturewide ineptitude. *Time* and *Newsweek* both featured "failure" covers last week (awful service and the victory of Japan Inc., respectively). Wild fluctuations in self-image have become a mark of U.S. character.

2. BEING THERE

New hostages. The new mood on terrorism is best seen in the blame—if not actual anger—assigned to the hostages for being in Beirut. It's not only the administration singing this song: it's also the op-ed pages and network commentators. Scapegoating in the face of helplessness.

3. IF I ONLY HAD A BRAIN

Iranamok cum Reagan. Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain! Reagan's complete undoing is epitomized by the openly hostile Democratic reaction during the State of the Union. The speech—Reagan's last opportunity—flopped so utterly that even White House observers who had pushed for a tragic view of Reagan have thrown in their towels: there's no there there.

4. MIND YOUR BUSINESS

Compassion cum ethics. (*a*) Anti-government rhetoric is dead. (*b*) The newly favored rhetorical target is the business world. (*c*) A recent look at prime-time TV finds most bad guys this year have been businessmen. (*d*) Oliver (*Platoon*) Stone's next movie will be about Wall Street. Increasingly, this is the script for the 1988 campaigns.

5. 'ROO THE DAY

America's Cup cum Australia. The America's Cup hype has cemented U.S. interest in once-ignored Australia. The "Today Show" is live-from-Down Under and Robert Hughes's history has gotten much attention, but the real tip-off is reportage on internal Australian matters (e.g., its immigration laws), a level of interest in foreign places reserved only for Great Britain.

6. RUSSIAN AHEAD

Glasnost. The world's free press took Gorbachev's call for "democracy" far more seriously, as a sign of change, than it did Reagan's address. Indeed, in the international p.r. contest of vigor v. aged weariness, national roles have been reversed, and Reagan seems increasingly Gorbachev's foil.

7. THROUGH THE SPYGLASS

CIA. The retirement of the ill William Casey has highlighted the CIA's rapid reversal in stature and public trust. From its post-Watergate nadir, the agency was reconstructed to the point, only months ago, when Casey could confidently try to cow powerful newspapers. That is now unimaginable, again.

8. COUP D'TAPE

The Marcos show. The exploits of Ferdinand and Imelda got more TV time than did the content of Cory Aquino's proposed (and approved) constitution, but so what? The Marcoses only make her look better.

9. CROSSOVER MUSIC

Home leisure. Goodbye vinyl? Goodbye record stores! CDs are making a crossover into video outlets, with both businesses delighted at the result. Nearly all CD owners are also VCR owners, and the resulting environment is a natural for an impulse purchase. CD sales for '86 were up 150 percent; vinyl was down 25 percent.

10. GIRLS WHO TARRY DO MARRY

Marriage. Last year's finding that women over 30 were unlikely to marry got enormous attention, perhaps because it played so well with the traditional, "Reaganite" mores that were then so strong. This year is different in a lot of ways, including the strikingly different finding that such women are *more* likely to wed, because their incomes are high.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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me once a month and be told I'm her biological father, I don't think that's doing her any good."

King Solomon would give him the baby, and so should Judge Sorkow. To be sure, Mrs. Whitehead has a biological claim to the contested baby that King Solomon's loser, who had lied, didn't. Yet what made the king's solution renowned centuries ago, and makes it exemplary now, was not simply that it cleverly established a parent's right to physical possession. It also dramatically demonstrated the selfless duty that renders that possession moral: the true mother was ready to renounce part of herself to preserve a whole baby.

That's the principle that threatens to get lost in the debate over surrogate parenthood. The judge's decision on the validity of the contract, which will make New Jersey the first state to rule on the legality and enforceability of surrogate motherhood agreements and will clarify what are now murky procedures, is likely to be Solomonic only in the loosest metaphorical sense. It will be a complex compromise intended to protect the competing rights of consenting adults. All the more reason, then, that his decision on the custody question should be Solomonic in the literal sense: the best test is saving the baby from the sword. What's the point of elaborate efforts to preserve parts of ourselves if it means renouncing whole children?

NOTEBOOK

□ GREASY SPOONS: Packwood's Diner, a fancy Washington, D.C., eatery, has lost out to an upscale new kitchen known as Bentsen's Breakfast Club, according to the *Washington Post*. The Diner, under the direction of chef Robert Packwood, opened several years ago when Packwood was also serving as chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. Packwood ran an exclusive joint, opening his door only to Washington lobbyists who wanted favors from his committee. The lobbyists liked Packwood's place because they could discuss what tax breaks they wanted without the irritating presence of taxpayers. Packwood liked it because he collected $5,000 a plate, and only had to sling the hash once a month. Besides that he liked the company. "It got to be very clublike," a Packwood aide told the *Post*. "He began to look forward to the meetings." But now that Lloyd Bentsen, the well-known Texas chef, has opened his Breakfast Club, Packwood's place is out of style. Bentsen, who is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, also serves the coffee just once a month, but he charges $10,000 per plate. The Breakfast Club has proven so popular that Bentsen is contemplating serving breakfast several times a month. He says he looks forward to receiving "advice [and] assistance" from his lobbyist customers. The fact that Bentsen (like Packwood) is very reluctant to serve the American public has attracted some criticism, but Washington lobbyists defend Bentsen's special-interest menu. As one lobbyist told the *Post*: "I feel it's kosher."

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

SPACE RACE

PRESIDENT REAGAN is slow to anger, but when goaded he fights back. Last August three senators and two House members prodded him during a White House session to declare for early deployment of the Strategic Defense Initiative. They put him on the defensive, as if he were lukewarm about Star Wars. "Dammit," the president said, "I'm for it." It got worse. Representative Jim Courter of New Jersey asked what would have happened to the space program in the 1960s if President Kennedy had called for vague research instead of specifically ordering a trip to the moon. "What kind of mandate would that have been?" Courter said. Reagan was furious at being compared unfavorably with Kennedy. Still, he wasn't ready to instruct Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to accelerate development of a space-based missile interceptor system. "Cap, I understand we can't do anything now," Reagan said. Weinberger said that was right.

Weinberger isn't saying that anymore. The five Republicans came away from the August meeting with harsh words for him. Now he is their hero. He's bent on persuading Reagan to go for phased deployment of Star Wars, beginning in the "near term." This means the space-based part designed to knock out Soviet missiles as they rise from their silos would go on line in 1993 or 1994. Reagan leaves office in 1989, of course, but he can make it painful for his successor to turn against Star Wars. If development of a specific system is hurtling forward, it would be hard to stop. The Republicans and Weinberger want him to start the hurtling. Prior to Weinberger's change of heart, Reagan was adamantly opposed to deployment of something short of a full-blown Star Wars that shields the entire United States from nuclear attack. Now Reagan isn't so adamant.

Inside the administration, Weinberger has few supporters on the issue. Secretary of State George Shultz objects to anything that would conflict with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 or the administration's current negotiating position with the Soviets. The Weinberger plan might clash with both. A broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty allows testing of "exotic" defensive systems, such as space-based interceptors, according to Weinberger. But the Soviets and some administration officials dispute this interpretation. And deployment in the early 1990s doesn't jibe with the administration's proposal to extend the ABM Treaty for ten years, a proposal still on the negotiating table in Geneva. Besides, Shultz and his aides don't really like Star Wars. "That's the bottom line," says a Shultz adviser. "They just have trouble admitting they don't like SDI, because the president does."

Nor are the Joint Chiefs of Staff sold on the tack that

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Weinberger, their nominal boss, has taken. In a letter written in January, Courter questioned Adm. William Crowe, the JCS chairman, about a report of JCS opposition. Crowe was evasive in his reply, saying that the chiefs "fully support the SDI research program." But Weinberger wants to move beyond research to actual development, and Crowe ducked giving an opinion on that. At the White House, Frank Carlucci, the new national security adviser, likes Star Wars, but he has been resolutely non-committal about speeding up deployment. So has Kenneth Adelman, the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Until late 1986, Weinberger was leery of early deployment. At a Pentagon luncheon with journalists on November 12, he rebutted both the technical and political arguments for early deployment. More research is needed, he said, before a path to deployment can be set. If you deploy a partial system that won't shield the entire country, contrary to what Reagan has promised, you might lose political support for Star Wars, he warned. "I'm afraid you'll lose some of the momentum that is required to be exerted over a number of years to get the better system," he said. Weinberger's chief objection was to deploying a land-based system alone as the first phase, leaving the administration open to the charge that it was bent on protecting its missile sites, not people. "A total shield—that's all we've ever been after," he said. "We've never talked about site protection. There have been a lot of people who basically have not accepted the theory, and they have said what the president really wants is just to protect gun sites, but what the president really is talking about is protecting the people."

The turning point for Weinberger was a series of briefings last fall by Lt. Gen. James A. Abrahamson, the chief of the Strategic Defense Initiative office at the Pentagon. Abrahamson told him that Star Wars research was progressing faster than expected, notably on a space-based system for intercepting and destroying Soviet missiles in their initial "boost" phase. Weinberger perked up. Now early deployment that includes a space-based part, involving sensors that track missiles and computers that dispatch rockets to destroy them, was feasible. This was real Star Wars, and it could not be characterized by foes as simply protection of U.S. missile sites.

SOON WEINBERGER was touting the breakthrough. "Our research has progressed so well that we now have an unprecedented degree of confidence in the feasibility of defense against Soviet missiles, for ourselves and our allies," he said in a speech on January 22. Weinberger was near-giddy about an experiment on September 5 of a "kinetic kill vehicle." Researchers "put together functionally the components that would represent a space intercept of an object being boosted out of the atmosphere," he said. "This experiment was so successful that it established firmly the principle that a moving target can be hit with a kinetic weapon from space."

Some, though hardly all, who've heard the classified briefing by Abrahamson were as impressed as Weinberger. "The technology is coming along a lot better than we expected," says Adelman. But Paul Nitze, the special adviser on arms control, appeared skeptical when he conferred on January 28 at the Capitol with the five Republicans (Senators Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming, Pete Wilson of California, and Daniel Quayle of Indiana, and Representatives Jack Kemp of New York and Courter). They had asked to see Shultz, but got Nitze. He said he was on their side in backing Star Wars, but he balked at a deployment decision. Deploy what? he asked. Courter came away wondering if Nitze had been listening when Abrahamson briefed him earlier.

IF NITZE IS a lost cause to the deployers, Reagan isn't. The Republicans have been resourceful in coming at the president from every direction. Courter has taken up the wooing of Carlucci, whose advice to the president might be critical. On January 9, shortly after Carlucci had become national security adviser, Courter encountered him at a Heritage Foundation luncheon. The congressman held forth on the feasibility of concentrating the program on "near-term" deployment and the political value in doing so. "It's much more difficult to reverse a policy than not to create one," he said. On January 28 Courter ran into Carlucci at a breakfast of the GOP Chowder and Marching Society. He asked if Carlucci had been "plowing through" material on Star Wars. "I'm getting smart," Carlucci replied. Meanwhile, Weinberger had been lobbying Carlucci, too, on reshaping the program to push for early 1990s deployment.

More clever still, the Republicans recruited as a lobbyist the physicist Edward Teller, whom Reagan reveres. The president talked repeatedly with Teller in the months before March 1983, when he first announced his plans for Star Wars. Since then, however, Teller was most interested in exploring lasers as the prime Star Wars weaponry, not the kinetic kill vehicles where progress looks more immediately promising. Last September 29, the five Republicans invited Teller to a small luncheon on Capitol Hill and implored him to join their cause. Without a decision for early deployment, the program wouldn't stay alive long enough for lasers to be employed, he was told. They asked Teller to sign a letter to the president. He tinkered with the wording for a few hours, then signed. The letter called for deployment in "the next half-dozen years," and urged Reagan to move swiftly "while the political will to do so undeniably exists." Teller had the letter delivered personally to Reagan by a friend.

Weinberger was more direct. He made an end run around Shultz and arranged a meeting with Reagan on December 17. Abrahamson delivered his briefing on technical advances in Star Wars research. Richard Perle, an assistant defense secretary, talked about the strategic aspects of early deployment. The impression they left was that deployment of a space-based system in the early 1990s is a realistic prospect, and that a decision now to prepare for deployment would strengthen the president's hand in

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dealing with the Soviets on arms control by giving him more to negotiate with. Four months before, Reagan had angrily ruled out early deployment. This time, he said he'd consider it.

FRED BARNES

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

CATCHING UP TO AIDS

SHOULD A LOT more people be tested for the AIDS virus? And should public health officials trace the sexual contacts of those who are infected? These are crucial questions about the virus infecting us, and they must be answered soon. On February 24 and 25 the Public Health Service is hosting a conference in Atlanta of local and state health officials to try to reach a consensus on these and related issues. It will not be easy. In preparation for that meeting, the national Center for Disease Control is considering among its recommendations a much wider use of the test, including requirements that people be tested before they are married, and every time they enter hospitals.

Some city health departments are already becoming increasingly aggressive in their efforts to track the spread of the virus. There is no denying the basis for fears that AIDS prevention efforts could threaten civil liberties. But more and more officials are agreeing with Dr. Frank Judson of the Denver Health Department. "I have to balance the reality of a fatal, contagious disease which is spreading," he said, "against hypothetical infringements on civil liberties which have yet to occur. There is no question where my obligations as a public health officer are. Disease control comes first."

To listen to the recent debate about AIDS education between Education Secretary William Bennett and Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, you might think our only option is to tell adolescents and adults to stop having sex and the only question is how and when to tell them. It is reasonable to assume that won't work. People will continue to have sex. Indeed, education is often cited as the best, sometimes the only, hope for controlling this epidemic. But many people, not just members of the Reagan administration, disagree about whom to educate about what, and despite all the talk about education there is little going on. That is why we must also consider other, more aggressive, public health measures.

Contact tracing as a method of coping with venereal disease began in the early part of the century. Syphilis has been the disease traced most often. Laws required that physicians report syphilis cases to local public health departments. Caseworkers would ask infected people either to notify their sex partners or to give the names to local public health officials who would then notify the partners without revealing the name of the person who might have infected them. Confidentiality was maintained. The caseworkers told thousands of people, many of them famous, that they may have had VD, and the information seldom leaked out.

The gay liberation movement of the 1970s necessitated a change in strategy. Infected men often reported having dozens of sex partners in a short period, many of them anonymous. Health departments quickly gave up contact tracing among gays.

When AIDS appeared and was regarded as a "gay disease," officials did not consider contact tracing. Now, with the increasing focus on heterosexual transmission, many are reconsidering the strategy. Most heterosexuals who are not prostitutes do not have large numbers of sex partners. If workers trace a case from a man to a prostitute, then health officials have authority under existing laws to limit the prostitute's activities.

San Francisco quietly has been running a case tracing program—for heterosexual transmission only—since April 1985. Here's how it works: when a physician first diagnoses an AIDS patient, he or she is supposed to ask whether the person has had any heterosexual contacts in the last eight years. If the answer is yes, a worker from the health department asks for the names. The caseworker tries to locate the contacts, never mentions the name of the original case, and suggests that they may want to be tested for antibodies to the AIDS virus. If the person refuses, there is no coercion.

So far the program has tracked down 50 people. Twenty-six agreed to be tested. Four of 21 women tested positive. Three of five men were positive. The effort is limited by both a lack of resources and an obsessive concern for confidentiality. If, for example, a contact lives across the bay in Oakland, the San Francisco Health Department does nothing, even though it has learned of an individual who could be passing AIDS on to others. The workers do not have the time or the money to travel outside the city. In syphilis control programs, one health department passed the name on to the local health department where the contact lived. The San Francisco AIDS tracing program refuses to give names to other departments for fear of breaching confidentiality.

Contact tracing of heterosexuals is relatively simple in San Francisco because the vast majority of cases there are in exclusively gay men. In other places with fewer AIDS cases it would be easier still. In New York the task would be monumental. Hundreds of thousands of drug addicts there, most of them heterosexual, are infected already.

Researchers and health officials argue that no matter how big the job, contact tracing—perhaps in a more aggressive way—would be a wise investment as one of the best ways to identify people who are infected and let them know so that they do not infect others. Some even contend that it is time to consider contact tracing among gay men. Dr. Marcus Conant, a San Francisco physician who chairs the California state Health Department task force on AIDS, sees many gay men in his practice. "The days of promiscuity are over," he says. "Most gay men in the past several years have had as

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few or fewer sex partners than heterosexuals."

One big question about contact tracing is whether it is worth the resources in places where AIDS is already widespread. But many of the arguments against contact tracing include the claims that have been used to resist wider use of the blood test under any circumstances: it diverts money and attention from education and that everyone needs to be educated because everyone is at risk. It is wrong to track down antibody-positive individuals because physicians can do nothing for them, and it is enormously stressful for someone to learn he or she is infected with a potentially fatal virus. Another argument, heard often, is that there is no proof that someone found to be positive will change his or her behavior and try to avoid infecting others.

Although it is true that everyone is at risk, everyone is not at risk equally. A lot of single, middle-class heterosexuals who live in terror of AIDS are more likely to die from a lightning strike. At the same time, teenage girls who live in ghetto areas where they might have sex with a man who shoots drugs are at enormous risk and may not know it. Until a lot more people are tested—until we begin to learn exactly where this virus is spreading—much of our policy will remain grounded in guesses and ignorance.

The argument about changing behavior is absurd. Sure, some people may not change, but we can assume many or most will, and that will save lives. Many women found to be positive will decide not to have children if they learn there is a great chance that the child will live a short, horrible life. As for emotional stress that people might undergo upon learning they are positive, I think most would agree it is a price well worth paying to spare the lives of others.

EVEN WITHOUT contact tracing, some cities are beginning to encourage more and more people to be tested. In Baltimore, efforts focus on women from ghetto areas where drugs are rampant. These are the women most likely to give birth to babies with AIDS. In Denver physicians now suggest forcefully that everyone be tested who appears at clinics for sexually transmitted diseases. These are the people who are presumably the most promiscuous and most likely to be positive for the virus.

What is notable about these programs is not that they exist, but that it has taken so long for officials to set them up, and that there are still so many cities without them. Many believe there should be much more testing for the AIDS virus—much more of an effort to find out exactly where it is spreading. This is not an argument for mandatory testing. We can accomplish an enormous amount now by offering the test as aggressively as possible with strict guarantees of confidentiality.

The arguments against contact tracing and testing, I believe, are contrived. They are offered mostly to bolster the one sound argument against testing: fear of civil rights violations for those found to be positive.

We should never attack public health issues without considering civil liberties. But perhaps in our battle with AIDS we are going at it from the wrong direction. If Congress, state legislatures, and city governments were to pass measures outlawing as strongly as possible discrimination against individuals found to be positive for the virus or people with the disease, then we could be less concerned about the civil rights. Such laws are imperative not just for humanitarian but for public health reasons. They would free public health officials to take stronger actions and do more to stop the spread of the disease. Education is crucial, but it will work far better if we know more about where the virus is. Also needed are campaigns to persuade people that discrimination drives the disease underground, spreads the virus further, and thus threatens us all.

This will not be quick or easy. There are many signs of the depths of fear and bigotry that surround AIDS. But we need to begin to protect aggressively the civil liberties of those afflicted with this terrible virus. So far we have been trying to defend those liberties by fighting the virus less fiercely than we can, and the virus is winning.

ROBERT BAZELL

Robert Bazell is the science correspondent for NBC News.

FACTS BE KNOWN

In discussions of AIDS policy, there are often misunderstandings about matters of science. The following, I believe, are based on the best information available:

* AIDS is caused by the virus known variously as HIV, HTLV-III, or LAV—what I call the AIDS virus. There may be other "co-factors" that influence susceptibility, but they are tiny in importance compared with the virus itself.

* The "AIDS blood test," which is in fact a test for antibodies to the virus, is a measure of whether a person is infected. People who test positive are AIDS carriers. It is highly unlikely that anybody who has antibodies is not infected.

* Infection with the virus is infection for life. The virus integrates its genetic material into the genetic material of millions of cells of the human host and remains. Someday there may be a treatment to control this infection. It is highly improbable there will ever be one to eliminate it.

* The virus passes from human to human only by sexual intercourse, mixing of blood, or from a mother to a child in the womb.

* People can be infected for years with no symptoms. We don't know yet what proportion of infected people ultimately will get sick from the virus. It is probably more than half, possibly all.

* No one knows when someone who is infected is capable of infecting someone else. The best guess is that it is early on before symptoms appear.

R. B.

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THE PRESS

INSIDE DOPES

CONSERVATIVE journalists have had it good in the Reagan era. In the leaner days of more liberal administrations, they had to howl outside the city gates. The Reagan administration brought them in from the cold. Cranky journals such as *Human Events* became relevant, and highly partisan conservative newspapers such as the *Washington Times* feasible, because they offered a glimpse into the thoughts and internal struggles of the conservative movement. Conservative columnists found themselves transformed into major national figures, with access to high officials, demands for public appearances, and invitations to White House dinners.

Some columnists even took to fighting the administration's battles in public, championing White House ideologues like Lt. Col. Oliver North (long a favorite after-dinner speaker of conservative insiders) against their more pragmatic adversaries. There is nothing unusual about columnists becoming administration favorites. Under a Democratic administration, liberal pundits would be the insiders. But these columnists were more than just political observers; they became part of the power structure. The Iranamok scandal has put them in the same uncomfortable position as President Reagan: they either knew what people like Oliver North were doing and covered it up, or they were so inept that they didn't see what going on under their noses.

The syndicated columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak and the former *Wall Street Journal* columnist Suzanne Garment should be especially uneasy. Styling themselves as confidants of high government officials, they told their readers last summer that the courageous actions of Oliver North, a key figure in Reagan foreign policy, were being undermined by weak-willed bureaucrats who wanted to send him back to the Marines. Thanks in no small part to such columns, North was able to keep his job and continue his extraconstitutional mischief for six more months.

On May 21, 1986, Evans and Novak wrote a column called "The Case of Oliver North," which described National Security Council adviser John Poindexter's efforts to have North demoted. The column is a classic example of the White House insider genre, with high officials often revealing their plans "privately." Depending on the writer's politics, these plans are "described" by "critics" or "friends" in condemnatory or glowing terms. Evans and Novak portrayed Poindexter as weak, and hailed North as "Reagan's star player in the long, hard fight to keep alive the Nicaraguan *contras* while the House tried to smother them." They dismissed the possibility that Poindexter might have legitimate motives for his decision. The real reason for sacking North was that "the gray and faceless officials" installed by White House chief of staff Donald Regan lacked the guts to stand up for North, "the one member of the NSC staff who could keep it in tight control of the unfolding *contra* drama."

The columnists took a combative tone, as though the press and Congress were going after North for some patently ridiculous allegation (almost as if he were selling weapons to the Ayatollah). In fact, though a few stories on North's secret *contra* war had appeared, they had received only passing attention. In many cases, newspapers did not even use North's name. And though congressional committees were investigating White House links to the Nicaraguan rebels, the House leadership considered North unimportant enough to leave the assault to very junior members. In June 1986 Representative Ronald Coleman of Texas introduced a "resolution of inquiry" that requested the Reagan administration to turn over all of North's files related to his dealings with the *contras*. House leaders allowed this resolution to expire after the White House, through North himself, assured them that no laws had been violated.

Evans and Novak knew that North's activities were unconventional at the very least. Evans told me: "The complaints that I heard [resulted] from North's very imaginative and freewheeling efforts to shore up the *contras*." Did Evans know what these efforts entailed? He says that it would have been difficult to find out, and that he had no idea North was channeling profits from Iranian arms sales through Swiss bank accounts to the *contras*.

TWO MONTHS later Suzanne Garment vehemently defended North in her "Capital Chronicle" column on the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page. She too did not so much explain the importance of North as criticize those who wanted to transfer him. She asked her readers to put themselves into the shoes of Reagan's advisers: How would they reward North for his invaluable service as the NSC's "liaison" to the Nicaraguan *contras*? She offered three choices:

(a) Shower him with glory.
(b) Take him to lunch.
(c) Give him a big, fat demotion.

Garment clearly preferred (*a*), was willing to settle for (*b*), and devoted her whole column to preventing (*c*). In her view, North was the victim of unscrupulous *contra*-aid opponents, who refused to "accept even such a frontal defeat" as the March 1986 House vote approving military aid to the rebels. Congressional liberals like Coleman were fighting *contra* aid, Garment claimed, by "trying to create an aura of scandal around it."

Garment was aware of the possibility of a scandal. She wrote that some administration officials approved of North's demotion, saying that the president needed to "regularize North's activities." But, she added, craven "senior officials" (probably Poindexter) were going to sacrifice their best man just to avoid political trouble. Despite the admiring tone of the column, Garment's own account made North's activities on behalf of the *contras* sound almost, well, scandalous. North's work with the *contras* had grown "complicated," she allowed. "Sometimes there was a congressional ban on U.S. military aid. Sometimes there was no aid at all. So as part of his job Colonel North assisted the *contras* in

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getting military supplies from other places in the world."

As Garment told it, North had persevered and carried out his mission with great ingenuity, avoiding the legal obstacles erected by an ungrateful legislature and a pesky Constitution. Had it occurred to her, Garment could have broken the biggest political scandal story in ten years by asking White House officials a simple question: Where did North get the money for his irregular activities?

She preferred to protect North. "Some people hate Colonel North," she wrote, reporting as fact the canard spread by North that anti-*contra* toughs had poisoned the beloved family dog. (North's dog died of cancer.) The scandal, in her view, was that anyone in the White House had qualms about North's activities: "For senior officials to turn their backs on a man with Colonel North's record at a time when he is under outside attack is simply not decent behavior."

AFTER THE Evans and Novak and Garment columns, North emerged stronger than ever. He not only won the bureaucratic struggle to stay at the NSC, but also was given a larger office and another secretary. In December the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Poindexter's attempt to have North sent back to the Marines had been "scuttled because of right-wing pressure from supporters who leaked the plans to columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak."

Both Evans and Garment deny that their columns were aimed at helping North keep his job. "I wasn't at all under the impression that I was getting a planned leak to save Ollie North," says Evans. He and Garment deny knowing North very well or using him as a source. (They thus dispensed with the journalistic nicety of interviewing the subject of their stories.) Evans says that he confirmed his story "independently." Garment will only say that she got hers through the "grapevine." She contends that her apparent prescience was an accident: "I'd like to think I saw through to the essence of the thing, but I didn't."

Garment did get one thing right. In her column, she had reassured her readers that "Colonel North is not just lying there waiting for the ax; he has plenty of resources in the fight." Indeed he did, not the least of which were his faithful columnists.

Insider columnists are not political journalists in the usual sense. They are more like the guy who hosts "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." They become celebrities by knowing celebrities; their success depends on the illusion that they are members of the club. They tend to limit their reporting to conversations with their friends in the White House, and count on their friends to pass along the "inside opinions and forecasts" (as the voice-over that opens "The McLaughlin Group" promises) that the column's fans expect. Had they asked tough questions about where North was getting the money for his imaginative efforts, they might have done a public service, but they also would have jeopardized their privileged status.

The writers who first got the real story about North weren't insiders at all. They were old-fashioned muckraking journalists: Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta. Anderson and Van Atta don't have quite the cachet or visibility of Evans and Novak. The Evans and Novak column has a spin-off on Cable News Network, and both men are fixtures on the video-comment and lecture circuits. Anderson and Van Atta tend to lard their columns with conspiracy theories that often push them to the margins of credibility. Their column is popular with the more insular local papers across the country. The *Washington Post* relegates their weekday efforts to the comics page.

Nevertheless, in April 1986, seven months before Iranamok became a national scandal, Anderson and Van Atta reported the clandestine U.S. overtures to the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran (including the arms shipments). Van Atta first learned of the Iranian arms deal in early December 1985. "Once a high-level official knew I was aware of this," he told me, "he begged me not to run the story because it would 'endanger the lives of the hostages.' He told me more details of the story, and convinced me not to run it." Another source in the NSC confirmed the story, but a third, more senior than the first two, denied it flatly, telling Van Atta that the United States would never sell arms to Khomeini. Though skeptical, Anderson and Van Atta decided to give the White House the benefit of the doubt.

Instead of publishing the arms-for-hostages story, they pressured the administration with a series of columns on the Khomeini regime's support of terrorism, while privately trying to persuade White House officials to give up the arms shipments. But the White House was directing media attention toward Libya and the Rome and Vienna airport attacks, and Anderson and Van Atta's warnings were ignored.

On December 13, 1985, they became the first journalists to report that William Buckley, a CIA official, had been tortured and killed by his captors in Beirut. NSC staffers turned the screws on Anderson and Van Atta. One official told Van Atta that if he published anything on the arms deal, Van Atta "would cause harm to come to the hostages, and the White House would publicize this fact." Finally, a source angered by the bombing of Libya allowed Van Atta to report what he knew. Van Atta says that the source's argument "was that it was rank hypocrisy to be focusing on Libya, even bombing them, while secretly dealing with and placating the worst terrorist of them all, Khomeini." So on April 28, 1986, Anderson and Van Atta reported that the U.S. government was being "quietly conciliatory" toward the Iranians. Two days later, they wrote that the NSC planned to begin direct shipments of arms to Iranians.

IF ANDERSON and Van Atta made a mistake, it was to hold their scoop for four months. After they finally did report the arms deal, many reporters from major media outlets tried to confirm it. They failed largely because the White House began to stonewall. Van Atta says that Howard Teicher, North's colleague in the NSC and a major cog in the Iranamok network, "brazenly lied" and denied the story to a *Washington Post* reporter. Perhaps coincidentally, within three weeks of the Anderson and Van Atta story about the Iranian connection, Evans and Novak launched the first phase of North's defense. Two

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months later, Garment followed suit.

A little knowledge may be a dangerous thing, at least for insider columnists. In January Suzanne Garment left her job as the *Wall Street Journal*'s Washington columnist. Though she cites personal reasons, the *Washington Post* reported that her employers may have been disturbed by a conflict of interest in her columns on Iranamok. Her husband, Leonard Garment, is a lawyer for Robert McFarlane, the former NSC chief who was North's mentor. As for Evans and Novak and Anderson and Van Atta, the editors of the *Washington Post* might want to reconsider which column it puts on the op-ed page and which it puts next to *Broom Hilda*.

JEFFREY L. PASLEY

Mexico's next revolution.

THE MACHINE AND THE TIGER

BY MORTON KONDRACKE

Mexico City

Back in Washington, it's widely feared that before long something terrible is going to happen to Mexico. An estimable member of President Reagan's Cabinet says that in ten years, top U.S. officials will worry as much about this country as they do now about the Soviet Union. President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, thinks that Mexico faces an "Iran-type" upheaval. Gen. Paul Gorman, former head of the U.S. Southern Command, and Democrats Ted Sorensen and Jerry Brown all have predicted that Mexico will be a "major security problem" on America's southern border if its present problems aren't solved. A high-ranking State Department official says, "Nobody expects instability in the short run; it's the 1990s that people are concerned about."

Many Mexicans on both the right and the left (not government officials) also say that time is running out. "I think we're three to four years away from real trouble," said one economist. "For us, 1988 will be like 1984 was for Ferdinand Marcos. Light at the end of the tunnel has to be seen, or there will be demands for a different political system." A conservative, private-sector political analyst, Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, said that "right now the probability of instability is low, but if deep changes are not made, both economically and politically, we could be against a breakdown of the structure." And Jorge Castañeda, a left-wing scholar currently at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, said, "Things can't go on this way indefinitely. Mexico can't stay stable without high growth, and we've had four years of no growth. How long is 'indefinitely'? Less than ten years. It would be difficult to imagine this going on another five years."

Scenarios abound as to the kind of disaster that might occur. One is the Crash of '89: Mexico can't or won't pay its debts (currently $100 billion; annual interest $8 billion), the United States won't bail it out, the Mexican economy collapses, and the world banking system goes with it. Another is Nicaragua Redux: believing the government is badly crippled by economic crisis, Communists come out of hiding to launch guerrilla terror, using poverty, exploitation, and official corruption as causes to rally peasants, workers, and students. The government tries repression, radicalizing the middle class. The revolt can't be contained, and the country goes Communist.

A variant on this theme is President Reagan's favorite: the Last Domino, in which the Communists strike after they have gained momentum by taking over Central America. The administration envisions millions of refugees fleeing to the United States, with spies and terrorists mixed in, creating a necessity to pull U.S. troops out of Europe to fortify the border.

Some Americans and Mexicans fear that drug corruption, currently confined to state-level politicians and some police agencies, might infect the national government, and turn the country into a drugocracy like Bolivia used to be, or a battleground like Colombia is. A more optimistic outlook is a Philippine-style uprising of the middle class: fed up with corruption and one-party rule, it demands fair elections in 1988, is cheated out of victory, and resorts to massive nonviolent resistance to bring about reform. In an unhappy ending, the democratic resistance is ruthlessly crushed in a show of Praetorianism. That might put a stop to the process—or lead to continuing violence.

These are largely coffee-shop scenarios. Subordinates of President Miguel de la Madrid claim that he and they are actually working on a better and more realistic one: having survived four grim years of austerity, during which the average Mexican's purchasing power fell by 40 percent, and having weathered 1986, when oil prices collapsed, the economy shrank by five percent, inflation hit 100 percent, and underemployment reached 50 percent, Mexico turns the corner in 1987. As oil prices firm and other export industries develop, the economy grows by two or three percent this year and four or five percent next year, making it possible for the country to begin providing enough jobs

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for the one million young people entering the labor force each year.

As this scenario continues, President de la Madrid, having painfully and courageously set the country on a path of economic modernization during his six years in office, picks a successor who continues his growth strategy and also gradually opens up the political system so that opposition voices can be heard. The United States helps economically, by admitting Mexican exports and keeping credit lines open; helps socially, by avoiding a harsh crackdown on illegal immigration; and helps politically, by avoiding unfair criticism that would delegitimize those working for peaceful change. Eventually Mexico becomes a fully modern country, not exactly like the United States or Europe, because its culture is unique, but a sort-of democracy in which differences are negotiated equitably, the free market controls most of the economy, and the population (now 60 percent malnourished) becomes middle class.

SO MUCH FOR SCENARIOS. The reality in Mexico right now is that there are few signs of imminent instability, but many signs of pessimism about the economic future and discontent with the political system. A poll by the *New York Times* last year found that although 53 percent of the population approved of the way de la Madrid was doing his job, 54 percent believed that Mexico would never recover from its current economic troubles and two-thirds thought that, given a choice between serving the public's interest and its own, the government would favor itself. Two-thirds of the population favored more democracy.

There can't be any polls on this subject, but most experts think that perhaps 25 percent of the Mexican population actually lives and thinks in the modern world (that of free competition of ideas and commerce), while about 75 percent either is mired in feudal poverty and powerlessness or is benefiting from the status quo (one-party rule, state control of the economy, and systematic, supposedly lubricating corruption). The modernists all profess to believe in change—in what amounts to a second Mexican revolution—but they are divided about the pace at which change is possible. Those in the government and the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) say that to move too fast would disrupt the country's equilibrium and risk violence. Critics on the right and left say that to move too slowly—as they believe the de la Madrid government is doing—is to risk the very same sort of eruption. There is a widespread conviction that the years from 1988 to 1994, the term of Mexico's next president, will be crucial. Americans ought to be thinking about what they can do to help Mexico modernize peacefully.

Anyone who contemplates a second Mexican revolution has to be conscious of how it went with the first, which broke out in 1910 when democratic reformers led by the idealistic Francisco Madero ousted the military dictator, Porfirio Díaz. As he set sail for Europe, Díaz remarked, "Madero has woken up the tiger. Let's see if he can put it back to sleep." It was 20 years before stability returned, and the revolution cost a million lives, including Madero's—all told a tenth of the country's entire population.

The first revolution led to a political arrangement that, with adaptations, has kept the tiger caged ever since. In its present form, it reminds one dazzlingly of Chicago under Richard Daley, except that the PRI political machine bosses 80 million people, not three million. The PRI, according to a Gallup Poll conducted for the government, commands the loyalty of only 40 percent of the nation's voters; 19 percent favor the right-of-center National Action Party (PAN); 30 percent back no party; and less than ten percent support a gaggle of parties on the left. Yet in the nearly 60 years since the Mexican Revolution ended, not a single president, state governor, or national senator has been of any party but the PRI.

Right now there are 111 opposition members in the 400-seat Chamber of Deputies, but the legislature is little more than a debating society whose deliberations end with a rubber stamp. The party also controls the police and the judiciary. Out-of-favor politicians accused of corruption can be held in jail for months without charge. There is fundamentally no recourse from decisions of the vast, patronage-fed bureaucracy, which on important political matters almost invariably favors the PRI.

The bureaucracy has great power. The Mexican national budget accounts directly for just 25 percent of GNP (about the U.S. level), but U.S. officials figure that the government actually controls 70 percent of the economy when the nationalized banks and government-owned industries are included, plus the private concerns that have to get licenses, permits, contracts, and permission to raise prices from the government. Any discretionary decision can be used to reward a friend, punish an enemy, or attract a bribe.

LIKE A BIG-CITY MACHINE, the PRI is representative of bosses, rather than people. Labor leaders keep the workers in line and deliver them to the polls (workers are issued PRI-marked ballots to take to the polls and have to bring back their blank ballots or risk losing their jobs), and the leaders in turn are rewarded with money and power. The oil workers' union, for example, sells jobs in PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, and until a recent reform had the power to claim or sell 40 percent of all PEMEX contracts.

The government also controls most of the land on which the country's 30 million peasants live. It gives them the right to farm it, not own it. The system makes for bad agriculture but good political control. The government promises land and delivers benefits (when electricity comes to a village, the PRI gets credit), and the peasants are trucked to PRI rallies and the polls. Those who resist the PRI's hegemony may be threatened or even killed.

Businessmen traditionally have been co-opted by government protection from competition, and business has helped politicians get rich. These days businessmen tempted to support the PAN say they may lose contracts,

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have their taxes audited, or face labor trouble. Most of Mexico's press is controlled by the government's monopoly on newsprint, by advertising decisions of government-dominated enterprises, by bribes to reporters, and by occasional intimidation and violence. Six journalists were killed in Mexico in 1986, the highest number in any country in the Western Hemisphere. Vigorous, probing publications can be counted on not all the fingers of one hand.

Left-wing parties get money from the government, and individual leftists are often co-opted with jobs, though threats and violence are sometimes employed. In 1968, when Mayor Daley had his police beat up Democratic convention demonstrators, the Mexican government ordered troops and police to open fire on left-wing students, killing 400. The memory of that is alive right now both with the de la Madrid government and with participants in a student strike called to protest increases in fees and standards at the Autonomous National University of Mexico. Neither side is itching for a confrontation.

Ultimately, as in Daley's Chicago, the government and PRI are in complete control of the election machinery. The inevitability of PRI victories discourages opponents from running or voting, but the government still likes to boost its margin by spending freely on public works in the months preceding an election, especially a presidential election. When there is a real challenge—as the PAN has presented recently in state and local races in the North—the PRI adapts by improving the quality of its candidates, and ensures victory by using Chicago-style ghost voting, ousting opposition poll-watchers and stuffing ballot boxes.

CHICAGO WAS considered a city that "worked" under Daley, and everyone except reformers and Republicans tended to shut up. Similarly, until the 1970s the PRI produced growth for Mexico and steadily improving standards of living. The Mexican consensus, though, was shaken by the disastrous economic and political performance of de la Madrid's two predecessors, Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo.

Having been responsible for the 1968 student massacre, Echeverría bolted left when he became president in 1970, expanding the role of the state, borrowing heavily abroad, firing up inflation, and blaming business when private investment slowed. He left office with the economy in shambles. López Portillo took office in 1976 and responded to the crisis with an austerity program designed to restore confidence. But when vast oil reserves were confirmed and oil prices catapulted upward, he sent the economy on a binge of spending, borrowing, and printing pesos. Mexico's non-oil export sector was allowed to shrivel as the government propped up the peso in spite of inflation and encouraged buying and traveling abroad. Foreign bankers clogged the hotels, pushing loans on the government. Mexico did invest in its oil industry, moving from an oil importer to the world's fourth largest producer in just six years. But tens of billions were wasted, stolen, or sent overseas. They certainly were not invested in Mexico's long-term future or its people.

Mexico borrowed and budgeted as though the oil price would never stop rising, but suddenly in 1981 it did. For political reasons, López Portillo wanted the boom to keep going, so he kept spending and borrowed more. With capital fleeing the country and bankruptcy impending, he took a bold, "populist" (that's the Mexican word for "demagogic") step, nationalizing the banks. Then he fed inflation with cheap interest rates. He bequeathed the presidency to de la Madrid with Mexico holding the largest debt in the Third World and with the economy wrecked. He is also accused of looting hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe even a couple of billion, for himself. He routinely denies such allegations from his home in Switzerland.

DE LA MADRID came into office in 1982 promising "moral renovation," "democracy," and economic modernization. He is often described as a colorless "technocrat"—neither he nor his two predecessors had ever held elective office before becoming president—but even his critics give him credit for setting a moderate personal tone and pursuing a painful program of austerity and economic reform at the expense of his own popularity. He has reduced the government deficit, sold off or closed half of the companies owned by the government, allowed the peso to find its true value (it's gone from 70 to almost 1,000 to the dollar since 1982), lifted subsidies and decontrolled prices, and put Mexico into the GATT, forcing it to face a future of international competition instead of domestic protection.

Some might say he had no choice. The reforms are the price demanded by Mexico's creditors in return for new loans, such as the $11 billion package that U.S. government officials are even now trying to force upon unwilling banks. Yet de la Madrid also faces countervailing pressures from labor, the bureaucracy, and politicians who want the hard times to end, who don't want a free market economy, or who fear that Mexico will be bought up by Americans. So de la Madrid has not abolished any significant government ministries, repealed the law requiring 51 percent Mexican ownership of enterprises (though IBM is being allowed to build its own computer plant), or denationalized the banks (though shares representing up to one-third ownership will be sold shortly).

For the average Mexican, the "austerity" of the last six years has been difficult and "The Crisis" of 1986-87 has been the worst. Industry is at 30 percent of capacity. The minimum wage, earned by the vast majority of workers, is 2,500 pesos a day, which is what it costs to buy a kilo of meat or to take a short cab ride. According to one study, 92 percent of all minimum-wage workers have to find a second job to enable them to feed their families. So the pressure is on for some relief.

By Mexican tradition, the last two years of a presidency are times of big spending and big stealing, when a president makes himself popular and ensures a comfortable retirement. De la Madrid's two predecessors resorted to "populist" stunts when the going got rough. For him,

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one obvious option would be to limit interest payments on Mexico's debt as the left urges, and as Peru's Alan Garcia has done. But when de la Madrid's former finance minister, Jesús Silva Herzog, advocated threatening a default last year to improve Mexico's bargaining position with U.S. banks, de la Madrid fired him. Yet another option might be the imposition of wage and price controls to stop inflation. So far de la Madrid has resisted that temptation, and aides predict there will be no pre-election spending spree, either.

PRAISEWORTHY THOUGH de la Madrid's economic management has been, both American supporters and Mexican critics are worried that it will not be sustained by his successor, whom the president is supposed to name by the end of this year. Three Cabinet officers are widely rumored to be front-runners: Budget Minister Carlos Salinas, Internal Affairs Secretary Manuel Bartlett, and Energy Secretary Alfredo del Mazo.

Speculation about their chances and their likely policies is all the rage right now. Salinas is said to be the person who "got" Silva Herzog over the debt issue, but he's said to be handicapped by being thin and bald and failing to cut the macho figure of a Mexican president. Bartlett, in charge of political fixing and internal security, is said to be the hardest of the lot. Those two supposedly are in conflict over the current student strike. Salinas reportedly demanded the university reforms that led to the strike; now Bartlett is in charge of extricating the government from the dispute. Del Mazo, a former state governor, is said to be personally closest to de la Madrid and to Mexico's labor boss, Fidel Velázquez, and to be the least likely to favor continued austerity or selling off of government enterprises.

The fact is that no one knows whom de la Madrid will pick or what the successor's policies will be. Politicians with a yen for the presidency tend to support whatever policies the incumbent recommends (de la Madrid, for example, was López Portillo's budget minister). Then they often repudiate those policies once they are in office. Mexico's most sensitive social critics assert it is this utter lack of political accountability that is at the root of the country's problems.

"De la Madrid is the most decent, low-key, and responsible president that Mexico has had for decades," says writer Enrique Krauze, "but without democracy, how can we be sure that the next president will be a decent, low-key guy? What assures us that if Providence sends us new wealth, as it did during the oil boom, we won't waste it the way we did the last time?" Krauze and Octavio Paz, the top editors of the monthly *Vuelta*, are among a small group of intellectuals who break the mode of reflexive anti-Americanism. Krauze contends, "Mexico needs a radical change toward Western political institutions, and it's ready for that. The PRI says that 'our history and culture make us different from everywhere else in the world,' but that is just lies. Democracy is democracy the world over."

Krauze and others charge that, despite his promises, de la Madrid has done fundamentally nothing to make Mexico more democratic. He took a step in 1983, when the PRI loosened its grip during local elections—and promptly lost mayoral races in five state capitals and ten other medium-sized cities. In 1985 and 1986, the old rules were back in force. PRI officials claim (and some U.S. journalists affirm) that the PRI could have won without stealing, but it couldn't settle for less than 4-to-1, so it stole.

De la Madrid has instituted some modest political reforms, such as expanding the number of opposition seats in the Chamber of Deputies and providing more money for opposition election propaganda, but critics charge that this is window dressing, "change for the sake of keeping things the same." There is no sign of fundamental change, such as open campaigning or even primary elections for president, or placing election machinery into impartial hands so that opposition candidates might have a real chance to win governorships and senate seats.

Nor is there any sign that de la Madrid is changing the system by stopping endemic corruption or decentralizing bureaucratic control. He has set an example of personal modesty. He also has required top officials to disclose their assets to an internal auditing office. He prosecuted a few López Portillo allies, and he cut off the oil union's automatic contracts. Signs now appear in government offices advising citizens that services there are free. But businessmen report that bribes are still a way of life "to get your paper moved from the bottom of the pile to the top." De la Madrid made a stab at loosening the grip of the teachers' union and the education ministry to improve schooling and provide local control, but it came to naught.

DE LA MADRID'S strategy seems to be to set Mexico on an *economic* reform path and to appoint a successor who will carry it through, but to leave political reform for the future. PRI modernists say that there is no choice for Mexico except continued modernization across the board, though they often say, "You Americans don't appreciate what we're doing because you're hung up on elections."

PRI officials like to claim that Mexico is a "perfectible democracy" in which disparate ideological, geographic, and economic interests can work out their differences—within the PRI. But open up the system for unqualified democracy? On the one hand, they claim that the PAN and the left parties have nothing like the PRI's broad-based appeal to the populous. On the other hand, they seem afraid that if the PAN were to win one state governorship, Mexico's whole political system might collapse. Modernists outside the PRI hope that one day soon the country will become like Spain. Inside the PRI, the best they can imagine are the models of India and Japan, where one party rules, but can lose elections occasionally to keep a check on the government.

Mexico is still a long way from any such model, and so there is no guarantee that de la Madrid's successor won't be another Echeverría or López Portillo, or that de la Ma-

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drid's economic modernization will really continue. And if there is not substantial economic improvement—especially if there is not enough growth to provide an improved standard of living for a population growing at the rate of 2.5 percent a year—then the country's stability may be in danger.

RIGHT NOW there are no signs of imminent blowup or collapse. No guerrilla groups are active in the country. The crime rate is up in most cities, but it doesn't seem to have political content. In Mexico City one doesn't get a sense of sullenness or revolutionary fervor in the slums. On the outskirts of town, desperately poor peasants flood in from the countryside—"parachutists," they're called—and squat in dusty squalor on private land. Yet there's no sense of fierceness here, either. The government has tended to side with the squatters in land disputes, electricity gets installed, and on Sunday afternoons parachutists spend their time and savings building homes out of brick or cinder block.

There were 450 demonstrations in Mexico City in 1986, and only one got violent. The current strike at UNAM has a potential for trouble of the kind that disrupted France last month, but a mass march of 150,000 students on January 21 was meticulously marshaled, entirely peaceful, and devoted exclusively to the issue of reversing the government reform plan.

Four of Mexico's left-wing parties are trying to unify, but solely to present a common front in the 1988 presidential election and to challenge the PAN for second position behind the PRI. Only one small left party has formally sided with the university students, and the left wasn't even able to take advantage of the government's tardiness in housing hundreds of thousands of homeless people after the 1985 earthquake.

U.S. intelligence sources say that the Soviet Union and Cuba have deeply penetrated leftist parties, some large unions, and the university, but that they are pursuing a pacific strategy pending truly dire developments. "The Cubans don't attack a healthy victim," an administration official said. "They wait for somebody to fall in a hole and break his leg. Then they jump him."

Right now, U.S. officials say, the huge Soviet and Cuban embassies are primarily used as base camps for destabilization of Central America, not Mexico, and for espionage in the United States, especially in defense industries and Silicon Valley. When Mikhail Gorbachev comes to visit later this year, Mexico is expected to provide more trade missions and cultural exchanges in which the Soviets can plant KGB agents, but the Mexicans reportedly have turned down Soviet requests for new consulates near the U.S. border.

As ever, Mexicans have a love-hate relationship with the United States—with admiration predominating among conservatives, and fear and envy dominating on the left. Both groups, and those in the middle, are more aware than Americans ever are of the impact that the U.S. economy and culture has on theirs.

Some Mexicans, left intellectuals especially, exaggerate the impact, believing Mexico is a mere colony of the United States, blaming the United States for all the country's troubles, and refusing to take responsibility for Mexico's own hand in its condition. Some of them believe that Mexico is safe from violent revolution or economic collapse because "the United States would never allow it." The United States surely will try to forestall such events, but the idea that the it would endlessly bail out a bankrupt economy or militarily intervene in a country of 80 million people (which is what some Mexicans anticipate) seems wildly unrealistic.

What should the United States do to help Mexico prosper? Above all, it should keep U.S. markets open to Mexican products, which it does not always do. "Every time we develop a comparative advantage in any product," one Mexican economist remarked at a recent academic conference, "the United States slaps a countervailing duty on it." An American scholar responded, "And so you develop a comparative advantage in brown heroin." U.S. import restrictions at various times have been applied to shoes, vegetables, flowers, steel, and cement.

And now some members of Congress, Democrats especially, are threatening to curb the *machiladora*, Mexican firms that import partially finished American products, assemble them for return to the American market, and pay duty only on the value added. Some U.S. unions say the industries are stealing American jobs; actually, they are preventing whole industries from being moved to Taiwan.

Although stingy on trade, Democrats tend to be more generous than the Reagan administration on Mexican debt relief. Democrats, led by Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey, tend to think—correctly—that Mexico can't ever invest and grow if it has to pay 60 percent of its export earnings in debt service, and that the United States is condemning Mexico to permanent poverty and possible instability by demanding full payment. Reagan's treasury secretary, James Baker, and Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker claim that U.S. banks simply won't lend new money to Mexico if its debts aren't paid, and that this will hasten collapse.

THERE MUST BE a way out of this bind, but it will take action. Bruce McColm of Freedom House, a human rights watchdog group, suggested in 1984 that the United States should "separate current interest rates from those established by the Federal Reserve and renegotiate the Latin American debt, allowing for special concessionary rates that spread payment over a longer period and reduce costs to the debtor countries. Unpaid interest could be written off, so long as the debtor countries agreed to reinvest these amounts in their economies and not in the maintenance of government bureaucracies."

McColm favored having the burden fall jointly on the U.S. banks and U.S. taxpayers, and suggested that "a bold foreign policy initiative in this field could have far-reaching effects not only on our relationship with Mexico, but with the whole developing world." He's right, and if U.S. officials—perhaps Bradley and Baker thinking together?—

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can bring it off, they'll earn a place in the history of the hemisphere that surpasses John F. Kennedy's for establishing the Alliance for Progress.

Beyond trade and debt, the United States ought to do more to curb drug abuse at home, on the "demand side" of the problem, instead of simply berating the Mexicans for failing to control the supply. And instead of trying to crack down on illegal Mexican immigration, the United States might well establish a work-permit system to legalize temporary movement across the border. Studies show that most immigrants only want to stay in the United States for a short time to earn money and then go home. The United States could save lots of money and emotional cost by making that easy.

Finally, the United States needs to treat Mexico as an adult nation, and tell it the truth. Mexicans, especially in the government, claim that criticism in Washington reverberates like an earthquake in Mexico City, shaking the foundations of the system. But in fact, the people of Mexico seem to want democracy, clean government, and a modern economy. For Americans to point out that they haven't got it, and for us to identify with those who are striving to produce it, would help to ensure true stability and do both Mexico and ourselves a favor.

The gimmicky GOP stays on top.

FAT AND SASSY

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

IN THE PAST decade the Republican Party has become a modern national machine, complete with millions of dollars' worth of public opinion analysis, systematic links to state GOPs, get-out-the-vote drives, and lavish in-kind contributions to candidates. Organizationally, the Republicans outspend the Democrats by at least 5-to-1. All of this has added up to a kind of institutional Teflon. It helped cut GOP losses in recent congressional elections, produced gains in statehouses, and enabled Republicans to prevail in close races. Between 1978 and 1984, 24 Senate elections were decided by less than four percent of the vote. Republicans won 19 of them.

Election Day 1986, seemingly, was the day the music died. Superior Republican money, organization, and political technology failed to save the Republican Senate. The Republicans apparently had King Midas's problem: sticky fingers hardened into a gluey mess. A recorded phone message by the president produced more bemusement than votes. An expensive ballot security program may have cost the GOP the Louisiana election. Some Republican candidates, such as "Million Dollar Mark" Andrews of North Dakota, apparently were hurt by being too lavishly financed. A few weeks later, state-of-the-art spin control failed to save the president's ratings from the Iran arms scandal.

Does this mean, as many commentators concluded, that money doesn't matter after all? Not quite. Other things being equal (which they weren't in 1986), the playing field remains tilted. A supreme irony of recent American politics is that we finally have something that the left has long sought in vain: a European-style, ideologically coherent, institutionally strong political party. The only trouble is, it happens to be the Republican Party. In the 1985-86 election cycle, the Republican National Committee raised $75 million. The DNC raised $15 million, a disparity of precisely 5-to-1.

This continued a trend of widening imbalance that began in the late 1970s. Recently the Democrats have been playing catch-up. They built their own national party headquarters, near Capitol Hill, appropriately located on the other side of the tracks (it is actually on a bargain piece of real estate about ten feet from the tracks, and the windows rattle whenever a train goes by). They got serious about direct-mail fund-raising, and now have a proven list of donors of nearly 600,000, compared to the GOP's 1.8 million. They have begun cooperative fund-raising programs with state parties, sharing mailing lists and design expenses, and giving out small grants. All of this systematic party-building is welcome. But the GOP still does it better.

In the 1985-86 election cycle, the Republican National Committee and its House and Senate affiliates spent between $17 million and $22 million on state and local party-building activities. The Democrats spent something like a million. The DNC conducted a national attitudes poll, coded demographically, to assist in long-term strategic planning, the first such poll since 1981. The RNC conducts them monthly. The Democrats now have access to sophisticated voter targeting developed by the National Committee for an Effective Congress. The Republicans do more of it, and in-house. Last year the DNC allocated about $160,000 to state parties, in minigrants of $10,000 to $20,000 each, to help them develop and update coded voter lists. The RNC, which has been doing this for years, spent about $2.5 million.

Consider some specifics. In Missouri, where Democrats

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ultimately lost a tight race for an open Senate seat, the Democrats put the entire official voter list on a computer. They planned a phone canvass, to add demographic and partisan identifications for use in targeted get-out-the-vote drives. But thanks to a shortage of volunteers, by Election Day they had produced a usable, coded list of only about 250,000 names. The Missouri GOP had a complete coded list of all 1.5 million Republican voters, and produced three sets of mailings as well as election-eve phone calls.

In Pennsylvania the national party gave the state GOP $350,000 to hire phone solicitors for 1985-86, which produced 35,000 new donors. It also helped build a computerized list of Pennsylvania's 5.7 million registered voters, with demographic coding and phone numbers. The Democrats have no comparable list, and get only token assistance from the DNC.

In California the state Republican Party used direct mail to sign up registered GOP voters to cast absentee ballots, giving the Republican ticket in 1986 a head start of several hundred thousand votes before the polls even opened. The RNC is sponsoring similar programs in 16 other states.

Ed Brookover, the RNC field director, says, "We've been able to marry the national party, the state party, the county party, and the campaign. We can have the three national party committees sit down at the same table, agree on a master plan for a state, and allocate the cash. We have much greater coordination on the Republican side, because our operation is vertical. The Democrats' operation is horizontal."

UNLIKE THEIR Republican counterparts, DNC national strategists don't call the shots, because they bring relatively little to the table. The Democratic state parties are still a series of independent fiefdoms, as they were in Richard Daley's day, but with much less capacity to deliver. Democratic polling and voter registration efforts, to mention two key party functions, tend to mirror Democratic coalition politics. Everybody has his hand out, and there is never enough to go around. In off years, according to Lynn Pounian, a Democratic public opinion analyst, "The supply of pollsters far exceeds the demand, and nobody can make a living." Similarly, the modest party-financed voter registration drive on the Democratic side in 1984 was often hobbled by infighting, further complicated by the fact that the party's most powerful—and most explosive—voter registration magnet was the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The Republicans have no such problems. They just put everybody in sight on the party payroll. The RNC's sense of the big picture and its financial ability to hire virtually the entire stable of Republican-oriented campaign professionals purchases harmony, loyalty, and party unity. Democratic operatives tend to scrounge the business they can, in the heat of campaigns, and are far more competitive with each other. As a generalization, the modern institutional competitors of parties, such as PACs, lobbyists, pollsters, lone-wolf candidacies, and media campaigns, are said to contribute to the erosion of parties. Yet the Republican Party nicely coexists in symbiosis with the separate mechanisms of what Sidney Blumenthal called the "permanent campaign."

In effect, the RNC has created a national Republican Party by becoming a superb service organization. And by underwriting political services, the RNC has bootstrapped its way into being not just a dispensary but a strategically unitary national party. "The functions of party have changed," says Richard Wirthlin, who got $2.6 million from the three national party committees mostly to finance polling for the White House. "We no longer knock on doors. TV does that. But in the application of research and in the development of strategic techniques, the party has become a repository of political capital."

TO LISTEN to survey research enthusiasts, you would almost think that polling is the essence of the democratic process, and elections a kind of afterthought. In Eastern Europe, where there are no free elections, governments use polling for the same purpose that Western governments do—to manipulate popular opinion and to calculate how policies are likely to play. But in a democracy, as any practicing politician will remind you, the only poll that finally counts is the one on Election Day.

Wirthlin's polling aims to produce three kinds of benefits: first and most obviously in elections, but also in long-term GOP strategic planning, and in damage control. Since 1980 Wirthlin's company, Decision Making Information (DMI), has conducted polls for the White House at least monthly, and daily during some periods. By 1987 the result of all this polling was a cumulative file of nearly 200,000 separate interviews, all coded geographically and demographically.

In the 1984 election, the Republicans had an extensive computer file of voting histories, sorted by demographic group and by congressional district. Strategists could manipulate assumptions about turnout, shifts in voting preference, and response to issues by demographic subgroup and region, and could make decisions about issue emphasis, rhetorical theme, and scheduling accordingly. While Democrats were considering how to play the "gender gap" issue, the Wirthlin operation had broken down the gender gap into eight subgroups, finding that it carried far more weight among certain subgroups, such as single working women between the ages of 21 and 35. Republicans astutely compensated for the gender gap among younger working women by emphasizing non-gender issues with other women. Wirthlin's operation even took the trouble to input the hour-by-hour campaign schedule not only of Reagan, Bush, and all the administration "surrogates" campaigning for the Republican ticket, but the complete campaign schedules of Mondale, Ferraro, and their surrogates as well.

"This stuff allows you to peek inside the other guy's black book," Wirthlin says. "We were sort of amazed that they would have Ferraro in Texas, where our tracking polls could see her dragging the Democratic ticket down, but not in Pennsylvania or New York, where she might have helped. We beat our brains out trying to

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figure out what kind of campaign plan they had. We finally realized they didn't have a plan."

The Mondale campaign had no such apparatus, nor did the Democrats even do state-by-state polling after early October. Democratic scheduling decisions, rather than being informed by knowledge of where public opinion might be moving in the Democrats' favor, turned on such factors as which local leaders wanted the candidate in (or out), and campaign managers' often flawed intuition.

The contrast between Wirthlin and the last Democratic White House pollster is also instructive. During Carter's first year, Pat Caddell conducted polls quarterly. In 1978-79 Caddell went a year and a half without conducting a poll for Carter. Whereas the Reagan/Wirthlin alliance produced cumulative benefits for the White House and the party, becoming better institutionalized as time went on, the alliance among pollster, president, and party under Carter gradually became ever more frayed. In a climate of scarcity economics, and with a president who cared little about party-building, Caddell's White House polling did little for the institutional party. Democratic politicians saw Caddell's operation as siphoning scarce resources from deserving candidates. At one point, the DNC simply refused to pay Caddell's bills.

POLLING TECHNIQUES helped reposition Reagan and the Republicans on such issues as drugs, education, unemployment, and the remake of Nancy Reagan. On the education issue, where polls showed that funding cuts were hurting the president, administration strategists adroitly redefined the issue as teacher competence. The ill-fated "teacher-in-space" flight of the Challenger, which claimed the lives of schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe and six others, had its genesis in White House public relations efforts to demonstrate that the president cared about public education.

The Reykjavik summit illustrates how these polling techniques serve spin control, by allowing strategists to characterize a breaking issue in a way that resonates with known public opinion. On Sunday, October 12, President Reagan and his top advisers came home from Reykjavik, seemingly empty-handed. The stories on Monday morning, reflecting on-the-scene interviews with dejected officials, painted the summit as major setback. Sunday night, however, Wirthlin was polling. His polls revealed that most people felt Reagan had shown admirable toughness in refusing to accede to Soviet conditions. Wirthlin's report was at the White House by 7:30 Monday morning. By late Monday, reporters were puzzled that administration aides were suddenly proclaiming the summit a great success. The president had faced down Gorbachev, hadn't he? That shift in the administration line was the Tuesday morning story. By late Tuesday, the results were coming in from network public opinion polls, a day or two behind Wirthlin's. They showed what White House strategists knew Monday morning. A majority of voters had liked Reagan's resolve. By Wednesday, reporters, still a bit perplexed, were writing that Reykjavik must have been a win for the administration after all.

Of course, all of this technology has its natural limits. It tends to reinforce a purely symbolic politics, which, like a jolt of sugar, can produce temporary gains but headaches afterward. The classic example of empty political calories was the drug issue, which polls flagged as a big winner. In the summer of 1986, the White House launched a dramatic drug initiative. But fighting drugs costs money. In its anti-government incarnation, the administration had been cutting funds for drug prevention ever since 1981. And when the fiscal 1988 budget was unveiled in January 1987, drug funding was cut once again. Several editorialists pounced on the evident hypocrisy. In the end, the average voter was impressed less by the Reagan administration's professed concern about drugs than by its cynicism.

Moreover, in the hands of amateurs, fancy public opinion technology can produce the woes of a sorcerer's apprentice. Ollie North had currency at the White House in part because polls showed that his earlier exploits—Grenada, the Libya bombing, the *Achille Lauro* rescue—had been good for the president's ratings. Nobody thought to ask the pollsters to simulate the public reaction to a hypothetical Iranian arms deal.

What is intriguing, when one compares the Republican process of issues development with its Democratic counterpart, is that few of the Reagan initiatives were driven by constituency demands. If the Republicans learn what the public wants via sophisticated polling techniques, Democrats learn because the phone starts ringing off the hook. This, again, is the Democrats' major strength and major weakness, but surely it is the more authentic and durable form of democracy. Independent of the Iran calamity, the sudden hollowness of the Reagan presidency and its absence of an agenda reflected its heavy reliance on public opinion technology.

IN ANY Democratic resurgence, party-building will be key. Fancy public opinion manipulation will be secondary. There are public opinion analysts on the Democratic side as good as Wirthlin, but they are hobbled by the lack of party coherence and money. Partly, it is hard to get the Democratic "party" to focus on strategic planning because there is no there there: the Democratic Party, for the most part, is still a pick-up team.

The great hallmark—and ultimately the great failure—of the Reagan era was its obsession with purely symbolic politics. In the 1980s, politics has been eerily disconnected from people's material daily lives—a quest for themes that resonate emotionally. In this, the GOP's institutional Teflon reinforced Reagan's natural gifts. I doubt that the Democrats can ever beat the Republicans at purely symbolic politics, nor should they try. Real problems are accumulating in America, which demand public remediation. The Democrats do need to become competitive at polling, fundraising, party-building, and the other paraphernalia of professional politicking. But the more difficult, and more urgent, task both for the Democratic Party and the democratic polity, is to reconnect politics to people's lives. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Backward Looks

Credit Mel Brooks, as producer, with ambition. In 1980 his company, Brooksfilms, produced *The Elephant Man*, which was as ungainly as its protagonist but was certainly out of the mainstream. With *84 Charing Cross Road* Brooksfilms again swerves out of the mainstream, this time a bit more successfully.

In the late 1940s Helene Hanff, a New York writer, begins a correspondence with a London bookshop at the address in the title. Hanff's love of books and of England leads her to write the shop for items, some of which could have been obtained locally. (At one point she says she can't find any Jane Austen in New York. Oh, yeah?) Her flow of chatty letters brings at first businesslike responses; in time she gets equally cordial letters from one of the bookshop staff, Frank Doel. They become corresponding friends for about a dozen years. Hanff sends Christmas packages to the bookshop, very welcome in an England that is still on rations; Doel sends snapshots of his family. Through it all, Hanff dreams of visiting London, but she is scratching out a living, and when her situation improves, in 1961, Doel dies suddenly of peritonitis. They never meet. Moreover, the bookshop has closed. Hanff arrives just in time to visit the empty premises.

84 Charing Cross Road
(Columbia)

Filming Othello
(Klaus Hellwig and Juergen Hellwig)

She memorialized the whole experience in a book, and it's quite obvious that the book is a hopeless candidate for the screen. (It was almost equally hopeless for the stage, yet it was dramatized by James Roose-Evans.) High marks to Brooksfilms, then, for recognizing the hopelessness and proceeding anyway out of affection for the subject. The screenplay was written by Hugh Whitemore, whose play and screenplay *Stevie*, about Stevie Smith, triumphed over a comparable impossibility. But Hanff's book was even more difficult. Whitemore had to elicit most of the action from passages in the letters and from logical inference. Beyond that, he had to deal with the letters themselves, which are central. An essay could be written—perhaps (dare I say?) a dissertation—on the various ways that letters have been handled in films: shown on screen for the viewer to read, read aloud by the writer or recipient, heard as voice-over while we see the events described or, sometimes, other events. The essay would likely start with Truffaut's use of letters in *Jules and Jim* and Olmi's in *The Fiancés*, but somewhere along the line it would have to cite this essentially epistolary film. Whitemore uses all the methods specified above and does about as well as can be imagined.

David Jones, the director, enhances the script with nuances of his own—camera angles, especially, that work to the mood of the moment. Presumably Jones was chosen for this picture because of the jeweler's deftness with which he handled the relatively confined script of Pinter's *Betrayal*; but *Betrayal* was an action epic compared with *84 Charing Cross Road*. And Jones gets all the liveliness out of the new film that is legitimate. He also does well with Anne Bancroft, who plays Hanff. Bancroft (Mrs. Brooks in private life) spoiled the role of Mrs. Kendal in her husband's earlier production, changing the elegant Victorian actress into someone off the Bronx subway. Jones can't completely cure her of her vulgar appeals to the audience for empathy—a "you and I are just folks" quality—but at least he has calmed them a bit and renders Bancroft tolerable much of the time.

Jones has not had to restrain Anthony Hopkins, who plays Doel. Both men probably wished there had been some need for restraint. Doel's character is thin, pallid, clerkly, with very little flavor or zest even in his family scenes. After his death his widow writes to Hanff (another letter!), and she says that she misses her husband because he was so interesting and funny. Not that we have seen. In fact we have quite deliberately been shown the opposite. It's a negative compliment to note that this time, as against *The Good Father*, Hopkins completely encompasses the emotional span of his role.

So the difficulties of Hanff's book are not licked; probably they are not lickable. But the film is not a bore, just unsatisfying. The picture is actually harmed by seeing Doel and the bookshop and London, though it couldn't have been made otherwise. It's Hanff's Anglophile fantasies that predominate.

A sad film has surfaced nine years after it was made. In 1978 two German TV producers decided to do a series of 90-minute films about films by Orson Welles with Welles himself as commentator. The only one of the series that was finished was *Filming Othello*, and it now arrives belatedly at the Film Forum in New York.

Complete with huge cigar, Welles sits at a film editing table and talks to us—about Shakespeare's play, about his cinema concept of it, about his adventures in making the film. His color-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Crimes of the Heart. Three strange, seemingly comic Mississippi sisters, well drawn by Beth Henley (from her play), two of them well acted by Jessica Lange and Sissy Spacek. (Reviewed 2/2/87)

The Good Father. Anthony Hopkins, bitter and confused, as a Londoner separated from wife and child, vents spleen through another man's legal action about similar troubles. (2/9/87)

Platoon. What happened in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War gives this grim film about Vietnam combat even more grimness. Made excellently by Oliver Stone, who was there. (1/19/87)

Thérèse. A religious work comparable to the best of Robert Bresson. Alain Cavalier's biography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is spare in manner, rich in beauty. (12/29/86)

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ful talk is interspersed with many clips from the film—all shown without sound, with Welles talking over them. Also we see some footage of the 1978 Welles at lunch with two members of the film's cast, Hilton Edwards (the Brabantio) and Micheál MacLiammóir (the Iago), co-founders of the Gate Theater in Dublin who gave Welles his first acting job; and we see the then-current Welles speaking to some Harvard students.

Welles's anecdotes are funny and wry, particularly those about his difficulties in making the film. It took four years, was finished in 1952, and won the Golden Palm at Cannes. Sample anecdote: Roderigo attempts the murder of Cassio in a Turkish bath because the costumes had not yet arrived, cast and crew were sitting around waiting, and Welles decided to shoot a sequence in which the actors needed only to wrap themselves in towels.

Right from the start, the Jovian presence of Welles and the immense voice perform their magic. Paradoxically, he demonstrates that his voice was both blessing and curse. He had exactly the voice at 19 that he has here, and whenever he was in any kind of difficulty, as actor or in discussion, he could "voice" his way out. This was immediately convenient but led to sloth as actor and thinker.

An instance of the first, right from this TV film. Near the end he speaks Othello's address to the Senate. He *sounds* so great that he almost makes us forget that he is breaking up the sense, distorting the rhythms, and piling up phrases to arbitrary stops. An instance of Welles as thinker: at that luncheon, the talk turns to the subject of jealousy, and Welles opines that it is markedly a male emotion, that no dramatist ever wrote a play about a jealous woman. So much for *Medea* and *Phaedra*. But how magisterially Welles speaks.

I don't mean to pick pettishly at a man of genius who created some wonderful works. But his film of *Othello*, in my view, is not one of them, and this film about the film is not only a further attempt at canonization, it is—to judge by what has already been written about it—headed toward canonization itself. At the end Welles says, "I wish I wasn't looking back on *Othello* but forward to it. That *Othello* would be a hell of a picture." The very saddest aspect of this TV film is that there's absolutely no reason to believe him, even if he had been able to lose a hundred pounds.

TELEVISION

SITUATION COMMIE

To paraphrase Freud, what do Russians want? Do they want to woo our starlets and steal our stretch limousines? Would they force our wives and mothers to dress in the "Dynasty" style? Would they like the chance to belittle the talents of our Flashdancing young? And if they ruled us as a conquered nation, would they fear our resurgence the way B-movie scientists fear the regenerative powers of a bottled brain? "Amerika," the 14½ hour miniseries that begins this Sunday, is frightening all right, but not for the reasons ABC had in mind.

"ABC's provocative 'Amerika,'" as the network's publicity material insistently describes this would-be bombshell, isn't inflammatory propaganda, no matter what you've heard. Its politics are non-committal, if not downright incoherent. And its approach to the potentially horrific thought of Soviet-occupied Nebraska is in fact rather mild. The writer-director, Donald Wrye, claims to have had in mind something subtle, something abstract and thoughtful. He expresses great surprise at the furor his project has generated—Chrysler's withdrawal of its advertising, for example, and the letters from complainants of all persuasions (Jeane Kirkpatrick and Edmund Muskie among them) protesting the depiction of U.N. peacekeeping troops as totalitarian storm troopers. (And for some reason, the premise of "Amerika" is perceived as being more inflammatory than, say, "The Day After.") Surprised or not, Wrye is party, along with ABC, to an outstandingly reckless use of television and of its power to persuade and confuse.

Two things are startling about "Amerika" (which otherwise is extraordinarily dull): the range of formulaic television ingredients that have been crammed into supposedly ground-breaking drama, and the utter arbitrariness with which this cramming has been done. What emerges is the equivalent of a 1,100-page pulp novel, minus much of the pulp but fully equipped with the familiar surging passions. The time is 1997, the place Nebraska, the corn high. We find idealistic Devin Milford, sturdy and dependable Peter Bradford, and jaded but questioning Col. Andrei Denisov, all struggling for the principles they believe in and the women they love. Nobody, Russian or otherwise, is really a villain. Perhaps a few of the characters are self-deceiving, or maybe misunderstood.

There are teenage Justin Milford and Jacqueline Bradford, whose feuding families may destroy their love. There is Marion Milford, a grasping woman who will sacrifice anything, even her ex-husband Devin, for the sake of her own ambitions. More surprisingly, there are refugees and prison camps and drum majorettes twirling to Sousa marches under banners featuring likenesses of Lenin. But a lot of the action could just as easily revolve around the founding of Australia, or the exploration of an archeological site, as it could around the specter of our doom.

This automatic-pilot approach to the shocking subject of "Amerika" doesn't even seem cynical. It's just one more inadvertent example of television's ability to shape anything, no matter how important or disturbing, in its own image. Some of this, in the case of "Amerika," may come from trying simultaneously to be both explosive and fair, to mix fears and pieties, but it also reflects an unimaginativeness that runs deep. When John Milius made his film *Red Dawn* along similar lines, at least he did it with gusto; he couldn't be accused of pulling any punches. The Russians arrived and took over Colorado, forcing the local teens to dress in Army fatigues and hide out in the Rockies, stockpiling Coca-Cola. They were ready to fight to the death for their country when they returned to their hometown and found Soviet troops and imprisoned neighbors and the local movie theater playing *Alexander Nevsky*. *That* was war.

"Amerika" is more measured and, needless to say, more of a mess. Without going to great lengths to explain the Soviet presence in Omaha, it begins with the tacit understanding that the takeover was bloodless, that it wasn't really anyone's fault. The heroic Devin was once a losing presidential candidate, apparently a liberal Democrat. And his more conservative father, a once-wealthy farmer who is now nearly dispossessed, blames his son's failure for the loss of the land. So the problem is reduced to the level of a family quarrel. And it yields a certain

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dramatic bonanza, besides: the whole Milford family now lives conveniently under one roof, just like the Ewings of "Dallas."

Devin is first seen in the mental hospital to which he has been confined by Russians for six years. The overlong, portentous close-up of him, and the fact that he is played by Kris Kristofferson, are two good reasons for alarm. But the Russians find him fascinating. "If I could understand this man, I could understand America," Colonel Denisov explains. When the other players occasionally mention Devin's subdued state, and wonder whether he was mistreated in the hospital, they seem almost to be apologizing for the performance. In any case, Kristofferson was only just beginning to come to life at the end of the four hours' worth of "Amerika" that were made available for preview.

The action then moves to a church, where a large and wretched-looking audience has gathered, in defiance of Soviet authority, to watch a dramatic presentation. Something even a little bit controversial? No, the American dissidents are bravely watching *The Fantasticks*, which is pronounced "seelly and sentimental" by Colonel Denisov, who happens to be sleeping with its star. Denisov is played by Sam Neill, who has a hell of a time saying "Kimberly" with a mock-Russian accent. Kimberly, the actress, is played by Mariel Hemingway as the kind of self-involved, fun-loving ninny who is sure to remember her patriotism and come to her senses 14½ hours later, if audiences manage to last that long.

After this, all Amerika is seen waking, drinking the chicory-brewed substance that has replaced coffee. Otherwise little seems to have changed. The waitress at the local hash house is still a heart-of-gold type named Betty, even if it's only soybean cakes that she's slinging. In the farmhouses, families still live comfortably and their kids still don varsity jackets and bicycle off to school. There are refugees around, trouble-making Easterners who have been banished to Nebraska. But their circumstances, while strapped, are those of the contemporary homeless, rather than the terror and deprivation associated with totalitarian fantasy. "Amerika" does come out four-square against poverty, but even that seems rather easy. After all, there's a note of relief in the thought that the nation's insoluble social woes are now someone else's problem.

The exiles arouse the sympathy of Amanda Bradford (Cindy Pickett), whose husband Peter (Robert Urich) is an extremely decent sort who is doing what he can to help the Russians govern his district and is destined to be maligned as a collaborator. Amanda, herself destined to emerge as another of the program's deeply principled characters, also conveniently happens to be Devin's old flame. Life has changed, but she is still engaged in such old-fashioned pursuits as watching tearfully while daughter Jacqueline auditions for a dance role at school. Jacqueline does a terrible *Flashdance*-inspired number (and doesn't even do it well; you'd think the $40 million budget for "Amerika" would allow for one measly dance double). Her mother is admiring, but Jacqueline doesn't get the part, thanks to a visiting Russian bureaucrat. "Sometimes cooperation is more important than talent," the bureaucrat says insinuatingly. "I just bet it is!" snaps Amanda, resorting to the only weapon anyone in this drama has left: heavy sarcasm.

It's clear at the outset that the characters in "Amerika" will rediscover their values as the 14½ hours roll by—even Devin's sister Alethea (Christine Lahti, who gives the only worthwhile performance here). Alethea drinks champagne and wears a red corset when she sleeps with an East German officer, which is television's surest method of letting us know she'll hate herself in the morning. They all will, and they'll all rediscover

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themselves in a manner abstract enough to make the Soviet-American contretemps seem a mere metaphor. So "Amerika" isn't really about war, or foreign occupation. It has more to do, as Devin Milford puts it in one of his typically spellbinding campaign speeches, with "our failure as individuals to take responsibility for moral choice." In interviews Wrye has said he doesn't see why television can't be thoughtful about such things. It can. But not unless it dispenses with the champagne and the red corsets.

"Amerika" cares too much about images for their own sake, and cares much too little about how they're used. The soon-to-be-notorious logo of the United Nations Special Services Unit intertwines American and Soviet flags with the actual United Nations symbol, and seems to have been created for its graphic impact alone. It has no real meaning within the context of the show. Wrye has said he finds irony in such appropriation and subversion of the familiar. But in this confused, overstated vision of a national nightmare, the point is lost. Indeed, the program's only touch of wit comes in a scene showing American bank workers burning old money to make way for the new—which features stalks of corn and wheat and has been designed by an advertising agency in Chicago.

There's a key exchange in the drama between Denisov and Marion Milford, the American wife who has adopted the Joan Collins look and gone to work for the enemy. Denisov wants to know how Americans can explain the success of the Soviet takeover. "Many of us took the opportunity to create an America we believed in," says Marion, forever dispelling the idea that Wrye speaks wholly for the right. "There were millions of people who never participated in the so-called American dream. Ten to fifteen percent of the people were an underclass, perpetually on welfare, recidivist criminals, undereducated." Denisov listens to the woes of the welfare state, makes a cynical comparison with Soviet society, and talks about power and survival. "*We* manipulate in terms of the ultimate success of our goals, not their meaning," he says. The makers of "Amerika" do, too.

JANET MASLIN

Janet Maslin is a film critic for the *New York Times*.

SCRATCH 'N' SNIFF

The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination by Alain Corbin

(Harvard University Press, 307 pp., $25)

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer by Patrick Süskind

(Knopf, 255 pp., $16.95)

Hold on to your homburg, Leopold von Ranke. *Scheissgeschichte* has arrived. Eight years ago, a slim volume entitled *Histoire de la Merde* was published by one Dominique Laporte; it is typical of the kind of source that Alain Corbin cites repeatedly and reverently in his own alternately brilliant and infuriating book. In the self-consciously choric manner made fashionable by Foucault, Laporte called his cloacal rumination a "prologue," threatening us with a heavier outpouring. He has proved mercifully retentive. Others, however, have stepped into the, er, breach. Once there were too many books on the French Revolution. Now there are too many books on the history of sewage. Instead of histories of the body politic, we have histories of the politics of the body. Instead of the history of ideas, we have the history of emotions (of *angoisse*, of *chagrin*, and so on). Last month a history of 18th-century crying appeared. Whatever else its significance, its publication means that, according to the ranking list of 20 bodily secretions compiled by the authors of *End Product: The First Taboo* (1977), there are only 18 types of effluvia still available for distribution as topics of doctoral theses to students of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

This is probably not what was meant when, in the heroic days of social history (long since passed), historians were commanded to write "from the bottom up." But the history of shit is, in some sense, the terminal outcome of the injunction to practice "*histoire totale*"—that is, the history of absolutely everything. In founding the *Annales*, the vanguard of a "new" social history, in 1929, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch stigmatized the history of political elites and institutions as blinkered and partial. But their counterinjunction to embrace the totality of past experience has, in the end, led to an equally callow positivism: the positivism of the historically indiscriminate.

Social historians for whom Everything is fair subject matter are alarmed by the notion that not Everything may be historically constructed. More seriously, not Everything may show sufficiently striking variations over time to be worth historical discussion. One need not be a sociobiologist to speculate about whether there are not some human and social arrangements (important ones at that) in which perennial constraints and impulses prevail over cultural variations and differences. Consider family affection, now a favorite topic of the new generation of social historians. From the prodigious quantity of research expended on the subject of parent-child relations, it now appears that in any given period of Western European history there are likely to have been children who were treated (*a*) affectionately; (*b*) instrumentally; (*c*) brutally; or (*d*) any permutation of the above. Whether the dominant culture's institutional sanctions affected the prevalence of cruelty or tenderness in any particular period is virtually impossible to say.

Shrugging off the awful possibility that many of our everyday affairs might not have changed over time, at least in any way that makes good history and interesting reading, historians have rushed in the opposite direction. They are now eager to invest any and every alteration of sensibility with immense significance. To ward off the banality of the continuum, "revolution," that jackpot of the historical measurement of magnitude, is awarded to phenomena that might otherwise not seem to quali-

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fy. So that we now have cultural revolutions in nose-blowing, and shopping, and, in Corbin's case, cesspool-clearing. The history of the senses has been peculiarly (and aptly) prone to this kind of sensationalism. It was Febvre who asserted, in the best work of history ever written on a non-problem (the imputation of atheism to Rabelais), that 16th-century European culture was blinkered by an underdeveloped sense of sight. Albrecht Dürer would have been interested to hear this. Yet the poetic allusiveness with which the observation was delivered masked its empirical silliness.

"Revolutions" appear with gratuitous regularity to dull the brilliance of Corbin's book. He, too, is bent on rescuing the history of the senses from the dead hands of relativism and perennialism, by giving the history of olfactory thresholds in France its own peculiar and dramatically marked out chronology. Corbin argues that an indiscriminate tolerance of filth and stench (especially of human waste) was suddenly transformed, by scientific fears that putrid vapors were life-threatening, into the feeling that these conditions were unbearably obnoxious. Around the third quarter of the 18th century, sensibilities that had coped with the pungent ooze of the human cheese started to gag and to heave. One result, richly documented in the book, was the brief ascendancy of a science devoted to the classification of dangerous odors. It created the working data for the more enduring reign of social sanitation.

Corbin's book departs from this relatively well-known history, however, to make a much more ambitious claim. The threat posed by the unsavory aromas of the urban masses was so great that it made all animal essences repellent, especially those extracted—like civet, musk, and ambergris—from the mammals' meatier regions. In their place, as a kind of social pomander to distance the elite from the sweating poor they feared, bouquets of floral scents were produced. Their purpose was to effect an idyllic transformation of the urban dunghill into a perpetually vernal garden. The perfumes of Paris were born, then, from the same knee-knocking bourgeois trepidations that are now said to have produced most of the consumer diversions we associate with the 19th-century city: the department store, the *grand boulevard*, the public park, the *café-concert*, and so on.

If this kind of argument sounds vaguely familiar, it should. In most of its essentials, the scenario was written by Michel Foucault, whose great and ominous shade looms darkly over this book, and whose theory of modernization is rapidly taking on the status of an unexamined dogma. According to this received wisdom, bourgeois culture is always neurotically defensive. Pleasures that we might suppose to be casually adopted to gratify the epicurean hunger of the senses are said instead to be marshaled like an army against the oncoming hosts of class panic. And by the same token, the notion of a value-free empirical science is seen as another mystification, manufactured in the service of social domination. For knowledge, we are to read power; for liberty, confinement; for therapy, control; for sanitation, segregation.

WHILE CORBIN obediently toes the line on urban bourgeois culture, it would be unjust to classify his book as merely a variation on the Foucauldean theme (played ever more relentlessly by urban historians). His argument is too subtle, his material too complex, his syntheses of the history of science with the history of cultural practice too elegant to be shunted into some little league of Foucault epigones. In his account, for example, the manipulative and self-serving aspects of the scientific inquiry into contamination and bad air are more gently treated. And it is very much to the credit of the book that his astonishing (and often hilarious) account of the culture of social cleansing—from learned calculations of the height and weight of excremental vapor columns produced by the average person's diet to the deodorization of the formidable carcass of Louis XVIII with lime chloride—never descends to sneering. Much of this history, especially that of the experiments with captive populations in prisons, hospitals, and naval stations, is well-known, particularly from the English sources on which Corbin more or less exclusively relies when he strays beyond France. But the story has never been told so brilliantly, nor with such verve and perceptiveness. That alone would make Corbin's book worth reading, but one may read it as well for a deeper understanding of the roots of modern urban anxieties about the unwholesome.

Yet if *The Foul and the Fragrant* surpasses Foucault in its eye for historically telling evidence, and much improves on Foucault in its polemical reticence, its

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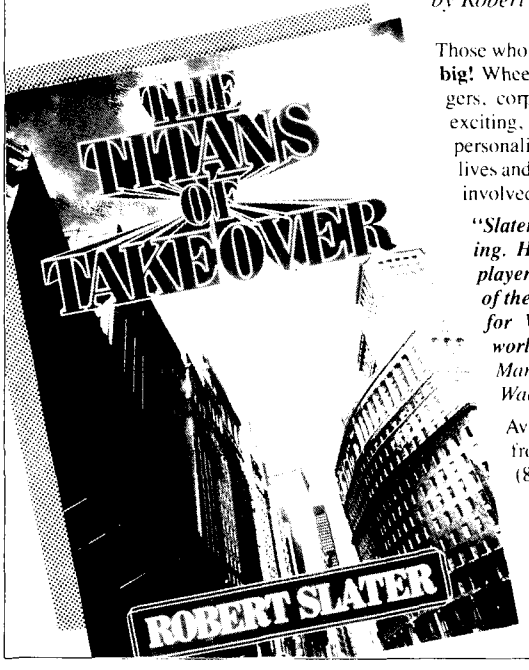
THE TITANS OF TAKEOVER

by Robert Slater



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thesis suffers from some of the same blemishes. For a historian so finely attuned to the guile of language, Corbin is often very naughty with it. (Poststructuralists, as a crowd, are exasperatingly oblivious to the way in which their resort to items of trade vocabulary like "strategies" and that fatuous buzzword "discourse" instantly loads their descriptions with self-importance.) In Corbin's history, for example, the word "obsession" is used insistently to describe what, by the standards of the day, were perfectly rational preoccupations with the relationship between bad air, foul water, and death. His use of the term persuades by sheer accumulation that it is the protagonists, and not the historian, who are obsessed.

Occasionally the lure of hyperbole takes over completely. Not only, we are told, were "the ruling classes ... obsessed with excretion," but "excrement now *determined* [my emphasis] social perceptions." And to prove this point Corbin wheels out the "dung man," "impregnated with excrement," as though the term were commonly used by contemporaries to describe the threat of the filthy poor. In fact the "dung man" seems to be a coinage of the author's. And there are other problems. When Corbin claims about the end of the fashion of wearing musk-scented gloves that "there is a vast amount of evidence on this subject," we must take him on trust, since he cites only one contemporary source. Havelock Ellis is cited on this and other similar matters (such as the sexuality of floral scent) as though he were a dependable historical witness. Sometimes, in the manner of Febvre, a cultural judgment is delivered with a kind of airy panache in inverse proportion to its sense, as with the observation that "the interiors of Tiepolo's paintings corresponded to the inarticulate expression of a new sensitivity to smell." Which Tiepolo can possibly be meant here, since the *interiors* of neither of the contenders (Gian-Domenico is the likelier) exactly spring to mind to support the analogy? And can one really trust a book on the history of smell that seems to think buttercups are scented?

ALL THIS would be trifling, except that the slips here and there build into a serious doubt about the entire chronology of Corbin's argument. For, as with all of Foucault's followers, Corbin shares the assumption that in some decisive way the modern world came into being in the century between 1750 and 1850. Foucault himself was weakest in his characterization of the early modern world, which he thought of as some sort of primordial historical soup in which there floated the bits and pieces of modern culture, waiting for the Enlightenment to systematize them into a cultural alphabet. It is typical of this reinvention of time that Corbin should imply that it was only when the thresholds of tolerance for dirt were lowered that Jews were regarded as "filthy individuals" with an "unpleasant odor." In fact, the *foetor judaicus* was one of the most ancient and persistent of all anti-Semitic demonologies in Western Europe. But perennialism is the enemy of "revolutions."

In other respects too Corbin's chronology is muddled enough to jeopardize his entire argument. The cult of nature was, of course, both the product and the cause of the Romantic discovery of sensibility in the 1760s and '70s, predating the great onslaught on urban filth that began in the 1780s and continued for at least a century. No doubt the two phenomena were linked in their rejection of modern urbanity. But cause and effect are not as certainly connected as Corbin believes. More seriously, the distinction between a premodern nose savoring heavy animal scents and a modern nose inhaling the delights of the *jardin fleuri* is

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very much less clear-cut than Corbin suggests. In fact, the evidence for the disuse of civet, musk, and ambergris in the 19th century is very thin. If they were used more sparingly in commercially produced perfume, it was at least as obviously due to their considerably greater expense in comparison with the more prolific floral essences.

These perfumes, moreover, far from suddenly coming into their own in the 19th century, had been a staple since the Renaissance, when amateur alchemists and *virtuosi* experimented with combinations of attar of rose, jasmine, lavender, orange blossom, and violets. Far from being an invention of the modern world, the exquisite scent of spring narcissus was brought to Europe by Islam (along with many of its other sensuous pleasures). It was widely known and used in the early modern world. For example, Constantijn Huygens, the great Baconian scientist, poet, statesman, and composer of Holland, used it in his experiments with scenting leather, paper, and delicate cloth in the 1630s and '40s.

To say as much is not to play the dreary game, practiced by too many historians, of trumping the century. ("You imagine *your* century invented this! Poor dear, *my* century was there long, long before.") But it is to raise serious questions about a necessary chronology according to which modern scents exuding their vernal blossoms are the inexorable consequence of urban sanitary defenses against fecal waste. Oddly enough, the much more evocative French title of Corbin's book, *Le Miasme et la Jonquille*, echoes those famous structuralist oxymorons of Lévi-Strauss: *The Raw and the Cooked*, *Honey and Ashes*, and, most wonderfully, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Wild Pansy as well as Savage Mind). Structuralism—the bugbear of Foucault's historicism—presupposed a kind of partnership between value systems and codes of behavior, which appeared to contradict each other but actually were symbiotically interdependent. Against this, a kind of dialectical hegemonism has become the established norm of recent sociocultural history, in which the inchoate early modern world is subjected to merciless Enlightenment social controls and then presented as the cultural ideology of bourgeois supremacy. One world is obliterated by the other.

But flowers and shit have always had a more ambiguous relationship. That oldest of intensely scented roses, the musk rose (which is, by the way, a conceptual impossibility under Corbin's scheme), is, by designation, both animal and floral at the same time. Saint-Simon complained of the ghastly reek of urine and feces at Versailles, but he understood that it was the prelude, as it were, to stepping outside to the parterre and inhaling the blossoms arrayed in Mansart's monumental Orangerie. "Night soil" as a source of profit was also not an invention of the bourgeois 19th century. In most European cities it passed to the hands of contractors, who in turn took it to the market gardens of the Dutch countryside or the Kentish weald, where it was turned into blooms and vegetables to nourish the burgeoning city population, which in digesting the food in turn produced more manure.

If it ultimately fails as argument, however, Corbin's book is a tour de force as chronicle. This is not faint praise, for the axiom that history is "an argument without end" has become miserably stale in the mechanical countersuggestibilities of the learned journals. Though he may well be horrified by the idea, Corbin's special brilliance lies in his narration, a gift never more stunningly demonstrated than in the opening passages of the book, where the reader accompanies the first professor of public hygiene in Paris on an olfactory tour of the most gruesome city cesspools. But when the professorial voice takes over, after this coloratura passage, and we are told that "it is also necessary to relate divergent modes of perception to social structures" and that "abhorrence of smells produces its own form of social power," the stale aroma of the academy begins to form above the bright prose like a scholarly smog.

IF CORBIN'S BOOK is slightly less than it means to be, Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume* is more than it seems. And the two books do, it turns out, share more than the (admittedly amazing) accident of their shared subject matter of the history of smell. If Corbin's book is a tract on social power, in the pleasing form of a chronicle about olfactory perception, Süskind's novel is a fable about the Enlightenment in the guise of a gothic fantasy. Both are histories. Süskind, who studied history in Munich, has provided one of the very best accounts of the topography, the social flavor, and the material life of 18th-century Paris to be found anywhere, inside or outside historical scholarship. He has quite obviously assimilated not only the great contemporary accounts—by Sébastien Mercier, Réstif de la Bretonne, and the like—but also a great deal of recent scholarship on a great variety of topics from wet nursing to the postal system of the ancien régime. He gets straight A's for his social history. More important, he does so without the footnotes swarming over the narrative like a plague of flies.

Süskind the novelist, moreover, is happily free of the obligations of Foucault-decreed cultural chronology. But he is no historical innocent. In place of Corbin's repulsive stinks, he gives us a repulsive stinker. Or rather, a non-stinker, since Grenouille, the monster of the story, gives off no odor himself, though he was born with the most finely tuned nostrils in the world. This formidable apparatus serves, in effect, as his esprit—as his wits and his senses combined; it is his only means of navigation through a world he innately despises. Able to tolerate only disembodied smells, he fortuitously discovers a perfume so heady that its essence, if captured, would provide the base for a scent of overwhelming potency and sweetness. So he disembodies it—from the freshly murdered corpse of a young virgin. After a spell of mystical self-annunciation,

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Grenouille ends up in Grasse, where he stocks up over-liberally with this hot property, after which the story and its anti-hero go over the top, and then steeply downhill.

Süskind's book is much more ambitious than its gripping gothic plot suggests. Grenouille is invented in the double image of the cultural world into which he is summarily deposited. He is the perfect acolyte of the Enlightenment's belief in the world as a machine, of humanity as a bundle of sensory and chemical matter (*l'homme machine*) that could be made to react in predictable ways through the administration of organized knowledge. The deists have demoted God to the status of the Great Clockmaker, and Grenouille becomes a little god, a Supreme Mechanic of the Nose. Through the Ultimate Olfactory Filing System he comes to believe that he too can create a disembodied essence of Humanity. Unlike the materialist and mechanist philosophes, however, Grenouille is a misogynist rather than a benefactor—an extreme case of scientific dispassion.

And yet there also stirs within him the budding counter-Enlightenment urge to become some sort of human "I." Without the Romantic suspension of disbelief, and without the innate gifts of Nature, he is obliged to manufacture a synthetic nature from the materials of his accumulated expertise. In the end, he is a victim of his own success at supplying an olfactory version of the sublime. In the admittedly rather overstretched climax, Grenouille surrenders himself contemptuously to the crowd, which has been deceived by his perfume into imagining a humanity that might be fragrant.

THE ECCENTRICALLY beautiful prose of *Perfume* is itself an alchemical shop of images of the Enlightenment—its fixation with process (set out, for example, in the engravings of the *Encyclopédie*) and the codification of acquired knowledge, and its relentless search for an improved version of Homo sapiens. Among the novel's most memorable creations is the Master Perfumer (working, as Süskind accurately represents, with *both* floral and animal essences), depressed by his inability to keep pace with the speed of changing fashion. In a very important passage, Grenouille as *sauvage* becomes the protégé of a crackpot marquis philosophe. His conviction that air breathed from close to the rotting earth was the source of modern ills is much less bizarre than a great deal of what actually passed for scientific speculation at the end of the 18th century. (It is close, too, to many of the working theories of "miasma" reviewed by Corbin.)

Perfume, then, is argument by narrative insinuation and historical parable. Leading us by the nose through a highly specified time and place, it manages to engage with matters of universal significance: essence and existence, sense and spirit. That it should do so in the form of a stunningly imagined chronicle is of great importance, since it adds to a growing list of profound works of fiction and brilliantly executed works of imagination that use history in ways wholly compatible with what "professionals" suppose to be the recovery of an authentic past.

The great historical novels of our time are not to be found in the ponderous costume epics that fall off the airport book racks. (These merely mirror the pathetic fallacies of the 20th century.) They are to be found, rather, in works like Carlos Fuentes's *Terra Nostra*, Graham Swift's *Waterland*, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and now Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*. These books go beyond historical decor to grapple with the elusive poignancies of time, memory, and persistence. Historians sometimes imagine fondly that the indeterminate boundaries between fantasy, historical narrative, and authorial argument in all these works sets them sharply aside from their own "scientific" endeavors to recover the past *wie ist eigentlich gewesen*. But if the rise of a new kind of historical novel does nothing else than dispose of these childish relics of a collapsed positivism, they will have been worth the writing. Meanwhile they stand as an urgent reminder that in a present where the past has a dauntingly short shelf life, history is becoming too important to leave to the historians.

SIMON SCHAMA

Simon Schama is the author of *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, to be published by Knopf in May.

TOTEM AND TABOO IN TERRE HAUTE

Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City 1871-1907 by Richard Lingeman

(G. P. Putnam's Sons, 478 pp., $22.95)

Shortly before he died in 1945, Theodore Dreiser made me an alternate executor of his estate. I was never to meet Dreiser, or to have any correspondence with him. The honor (I was bounced by relatives after the death of Dreiser's widow) came to me because I had written an appreciative chapter on Dreiser in a book on modern American literature. Such, as late as the 1940s, was the insecurity of the man who had written *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy*. He was now being belabored and derided for not resembling the newly resurrected Henry James; earlier in the century he had been excoriated for "immorality."

In 1900, *Sister Carrie* had been virtually killed by its own publisher, Frank Doubleday, because Carrie did not pay for her sins. Dreiser went into a tailspin, exactly like Hurstwood falling apart in the novel. Dreiser recovered well enough to become a successful magazine editor, to publish a second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt*, 11 years after *Carrie*, and to launch a trilogy—with *The Financier* and *The Titan*—based on the rise and fall of the traction magnate Charles Yerkes. But he never forgot what Frank Doubleday had put him through. The virtual suppression of *Sister Carrie* became a major symbol of his uneasy life, his alienation from the untrustworthy power system that was America to him.

Dreiser wanted to do well in that system, and always expected not to. A disciple of Herbert Spencer's merciless social Darwinism and "the survival of the fittest," he could not help identifying himself with the losers. He was marked in all his personal habits—his violent eroticism, his greediness and his sentimentality, the instability that astonishingly transformed his features from moment to moment—by a brooding sense of always being "out of it." Those who

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befriended his work from the first, like Mencken, never got over Dreiser's clammy self-absorption, and the fact that this often repellent man lacked everything except genius. He said of beginning *Sister Carrie* that it just came to him. "My mind was a blank except for the name. I had no idea who or what she was to be.... There was something mystic about it, as if I were being used, like a medium."

Despite the hostility that surrounded his career, and carried on long after his death, Dreiser's essential gift (seemingly a mystery to himself) for plumbing the depths of American life, for unswerving narrative sequence that made his characters ineffaceable, aroused exceptional supporters, from Mencken through Dreiser's early biographer Dorothy Dudley to Van Wyck Brooks, F. O. Matthiessen, James T. Farrell, Ellen Moers, Robert Penn Warren. When Columbia, in the late 1930s, would not permit Robert Elias to do a biography of Dreiser for his doctorate, Elias moved with his vast Dreiser holdings to the University of Pennsylvania, which became the center of Dreiser scholarship.

The jabbing at Dreiser never stops, but his place among the major American writers is assured. The first volume of Richard Lingeman's excellent biography now caps the renewed interest in his life and his work. It is the fullest, the most searching biography we have. Though properly detached from Dreiser's strenuous personality and sometimes overwhelming pathos, Lingeman has caught Dreiser's doubleness—the suffering submissiveness of his early years in "the furnace of American capitalism," his amazing gift for summoning up from below, almost without his will, the tidal surge and disaster recurrent in American society.

Lingeman's particular strength is as a social historian, peculiarly suitable to Dreiser's harrowing beginnings in Terre Haute and other Indiana towns of the period, and to Dreiser's full experience of the end of the century as a wandering newspaperman in Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, New York. Dreiser's father was a German immigrant workman in woolen goods, rigidly Catholic. He worked his way up to the management of a factory before he was crippled in an accident and lost heart. Dreiser's mother, Sarah Schänäb, was a Mennonite of German ancestry who became a Catholic at her husband's directive. But (a point nobody before Lingeman has argued) her own sensuousness made her almost too sympathetic to her notoriously wayward daughters.

DRAWING BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Dreiser family was so poor that at one time it was kept alive by a local madam, the mistress of Dreiser's elder brother Paul, who became a famous songwriter and vaudevillian of the period. At another time the hapless family was sheltered in the local firehouse, which also served as a brothel. Dreiser never got over having as a boy to scramble for the coal left along the railroad tracks. Later, as the driver of a laundry wagon in Chicago, he kept back collections due his employer. Eugene Debs, who also came from Terre Haute, called it that "sacred little spot," that "beloved little community ... where all were neighbors and friends." The Dreisers were often outside this. Even in Terre Haute, "the barriers of class clicked silently into place." But Lingeman rightly emphasizes Dreiser's enduring nostalgia for the town, which he invested with the sentiment that went into his writing "On the Banks of the Wabash" (music by Paul "Dresser").

Chicago, and everything it represented in the 1880s (there were 50,000 newcomers each year), was the different America that Dreiser had to master as a newspaperman, that became his terrific luck as a novelist. Reporting was the great school then for aspiring novelists. Dreiser, working on space rates (even Stephen Crane, David Graham Phillips, Richard Harding Davis, and Lincoln Steffens had to do that), did not yet know that he was a novelist at heart; he would have to be pushed and cajoled into attempting fiction by the Toledo editor Arthur Henry. But where early newspapermen like Mark Twain just got Western material from journalism, and later types like Hemingway (he was perhaps the last) actually learned style, Dreiser positively incorporated into himself the frenzy of building up Chicago, of a lynching outside St. Louis, of the 50 smokestacks of Pittsburgh belching orange flame, of the down and out in New York's City Hall Park.

It was a period when the managing editor of the Chicago *Republic* could urge a newcomer on his staff, "Remember Zola and Balzac, my boy, remember Zola and Balzac." The "newness" of everything was Dreiser's opportunity; it aroused him to hypnotizing contrasts of

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wealth and destitution. In Pittsburgh, workers had to get their washing and drinking water from the same hydrant. Their boss Andrew Carnegie was endowing libraries, but as a workman said to Dreiser, "After twelve hours, how can a man go to the library?" In New York's Central Park a poodle rode in a carriage attended by coachmen and footmen. Jacob Riis was making his way through scenes of total destitution on the lower East Side to write *How the Other Half Lives*, while at the same time Alfred Stieglitz was training his pioneer camera on "Winter on Fifth Avenue." It was typical of Dreiser to write the first article on Stieglitz.

THE CLIMAX and high point of Lingeman's book, of course, is the story behind *Sister Carrie*. Dreiser wrote the words "Sister Carrie" on a half-sheet of yellow newspaper copy paper "as if in a trance." Though he hesitated and balked repeatedly at having to go on, he did. He stopped again when he had to describe the complex unconscious maneuvers that led Hurstwood the flashy saloon manager to rob his employers. Getting over that, he was reluctant to face Hurstwood's decline, although he had planned the book so as to place this within the terrible depression winter of 1894-95. "You must!" he told himself. "You must! You dare not do otherwise!" Just as he was more than a little in love with Carrie himself, so he was frightened of Hurstwood as an embodiment of American push and swagger who mysteriously carried within himself some instinct for failure. When Dreiser did face Hurstwood in all his terror, Hurstwood took over the novel.

The full story of Frank Doubleday's attempt to squash *Sister Carrie* has never been told in so much detail, and with so much resonance of the period. Doubleday tried to get Dreiser to withdraw the book, telling him that "the choice of your characters has been unfortunate . . . personally, this kind of people did not interest me." The Chicago *Tribune* was to comment that the novel showed "the godless side of American life." And this just as Stephen Crane retreated to potboilers, confessing, "I get a little tired of saying, 'Is it true?' " and as that coming man, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, called for "stern men with empire in their brains."

About *Sister Carrie* itself Lingeman well understands that Dreiser did not entirely comprehend his characters' "chilling lovelessness." He was driving, driving hard, to capture all the excitement and pain of the power system. It is absolutely astonishing, still, to realize what a genius this barbaric man had for getting right into the lower life, the other world always below our feet in 20th-century America. The elemental "unconscious" life Dreiser retrieved from a harshly commercial society was already more significant than Victorian repression. Dreiser's narrative gift was for showing the collective momentum as the very atmosphere in which we realize our individual being. The constraints, the surges, the ups and downs: these were Dreiser's conscious choice as a novelist. What they do to our innermost selves was his special knowledge—even when he was not sure of all he knew.

ALFRED KAZIN

Alfred Kazin is the author most recently of *An American Procession* (Knopf). His new book, *A Writer's America*, a study of landscape in American writing, will be published by Thames and Hudson later this year.

A SPLITTING HEADACHE

Relative Merits: A Personal View of the Bandaranaike Family of Sri Lanka by Yasmine Gooneratne

(St. Martin's Press, 270 pp., $22.50)

Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy by S. J. Tambiah

(University of Chicago Press, 198 pp., $17.95)

The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka by Mick Moore

(Cambridge University Press, 325 pp., $44.50)

"There is nothing like a calamity," writes Peter De Vries, "to make you forget your troubles." Sri Lanka, that teardrop falling from the Indian subcontinent into the Indian Ocean, is in the midst of a calamity. Growing warfare between the government and Tamil separatists threatens to engulf the whole population. And Sri Lanka has other troubles, too. In fact, it is remarkable how neatly Sri Lanka recapitulates some of the central dilemmas of postcolonial countries all over Asia and Africa. These three books, seemingly focused on the minutiae of Sri Lankan affairs, highlight three of those general problems: the quest for an authentic indigenous culture after the profound Western impact; the maintenance of democracy in the face of ethnic and religious pluralism; and the need to unleash the incentives of the market, currently restrained by unproductive agricultural policies.

Sri Lanka had better prospects than most new states when independence came in 1948. Tea, rubber, and coconuts—the country's main exports—brought good prices on world markets. The newly independent government of Ceylon (as it then was called) inherited over a billion rupees (then worth about $350 million) in foreign exchange reserves. Life expectancy was nearly double what it was in India. Income per capita was more than double what it was in India, and that income was more fairly distributed than in most Asian countries. Production of food crops had grown during World War II, and continued to grow afterward. The country's social welfare system was second to none in Asia. Education, right through university, was free. Literacy was 60 percent and rising fast. Sri Lankans were generally well-fed. Despite the dependence on plantation agriculture, it seemed as if Sri Lanka would have the foreign exchange for both development and consumption,

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and that before too long it would be able to feed itself as well.

Politically, the outlook was even brighter. Independence was a gift, an offshoot of Indian independence a year earlier, but without the division of the country and the large-scale murder that accompanied Indian independence. Since 1931, Sri Lanka had had universal suffrage and internal self-government. It practiced a tolerant parliamentary democracy. There had been disagreement between the Sinhalese, who made up about 70 percent of the population, and the Sri Lankan Tamils over what constitutional protections were necessary for the minorities. Still, it was a very gentlemanly disagreement. When the British rejected the Tamil demand for disproportionate representation in Parliament, Tamils nonetheless joined the government. And underlying all of this moderation was a cosmopolitan, English-speaking coterie of leaders—Sinhalese and Tamil—who had been to the same elite schools, practiced the same occupations, formed some genuine friendships, and become committed to a united Sri Lanka.

WITHIN A decade of independence, the foundations of Sri Lankan prosperity and ethnic harmony had cracked. The terms of trade began to turn against Sri Lankan products. Foreign exchange reserves were spent on costly imports, including imported rice, subsidized for domestic consumption. Savings and investment were inadequate, and population growth offset economic expansion. One government after another tried without success to reduce the subsidized rice ration. Before long, Sri Lanka was just another poor country, dependent on the whims of world markets for a few crops, supporting an expensive welfare system and unable to attain self-sufficiency in rice, the national staple.

By 1956, the cosmopolitan elite was no longer in power by itself. To that elite, it had hardly mattered that most Sinhalese were Buddhist, whereas most Tamils were Hindu, or that the two groups spoke different languages. Many of the elite were Christian; all of them spoke English. Immersed in British culture, most had become disdainful of their own. When it came, the reaction against the elite was sharp. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, whose father was knighted by the British and who himself had been named for a colonial governor, had studied at Oxford. On his return, he set about becoming fluent in the Sinhalese language, shed his Anglicanism for Buddhism, and exchanged his trousers for Sinhalese dress. He rode to power at the head of a coalition that emphasized rural interests and glorified the Sinhalese peasant. Among the targets of the movement led by Bandaranaike was his own class.

AND WHAT a class it was. Yasmine Gooneratne's delightful memoir about the merits of her relatives depicts them in their full Anglophile flower. The Bandaranaike family, of which she is a member, served the British, practically from the day of their arrival, as headmen, civil servants, and judges. Early on they were converted to Christianity. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's great-uncle was a canon of the Church of England. By the mid-19th century, some of the Bandaranaikes were so at home in English that they had lost the ability to speak in Sinhala. In the 1890s, Bandaranaikes were being admitted to British clubs and studying in England. Those who did not study there spent time in the mother country at the conclusion of the obligatory grand tour of Europe. Back home in Colombo, they read *Country Life*, fawned over British royalty, recited Tennyson, and even remembered fondly the English cuisine on which they had dined.

If this was true of the likes of the Bandaranaikes, it was also true in lesser measure of a few thousand other families whose members mastered English, studied at one of the elite secondary schools of the island, and then took up positions in the commercial houses, the civil service, or the police. Like Gooneratne's relations, they "sloped slowly, but quite distinctly, to the West." In the late 1960s, a dozen years after Sinhala had become the official language, their children were still taking private lessons in English elocution.

To such people, it came as a surprise that their pretensions to superiority offended others. Gooneratne recounts the delicious story of her uncle, Frederick Obeyesekere, running for Parliament in 1960 and struggling through a speech in Sinhala in which he referred to the electorate by employing the term "traditionally used by manorial lords to the humblest of their serfs." Among those most offended by the English-speaking elite were the disdained Buddhist monks and the village leaders whose standing went unacknowledged by the men of power at the center. Astutely, Bandaranaike cultivated these people and massaged their grievances.

The Buddhist clergy was particularly well organized, and so it has remained. But there is a twist. In organizing itself, Sinhalese Buddhism transformed itself. Buddhist schools were created, but they were modeled on the Christian mission schools that had been so effective in producing Sri Lankans with English manners. Buddhism acquired the flavor of a denomination, and it sought official patronage. Thus, even in opposition to the West, Western forms had, in their way, triumphed. Not sufficiently, however, for Gooneratne: she, like a good many other Sri Lankans of her background, left the country for Australia to escape what she calls "a social upheaval and a cultural situation so intolerable that I was glad to move away from them."

With a judicious mix of passion, distance, and humor, Gooneratne's volume reveals just how far the Sri Lankan ruling class at independence had come from its Sinhalese and Buddhist roots, and how that class helped inspire a profound and continuing quest for cultural authenticity on the part of others. The discourse between the West and the cultures it encountered is hardly finished centuries later.

CULTURAL revival inevitably involves a good deal of myth, because the needs of the present are more exigent than fidelity to the past. Among the many fictitious creations of the postindependence period has been the myth of a Sinhalese identity unsullied by contact with the Tamils. (The Tamils referred to are the Sri Lankan Tamils, a ten percent minority mostly concentrated in the north and east. There is also an eight percent minority of so-called Indian Tamils that migrated to work the tea estates in the center of the island much more recently, but they pose no separatist threat.) Unlike the "Dravidian" Tamils, the Sinhalese are said to be "Aryans" who came from North India. It is this racial myth that S. J. Tambiah, a Harvard anthropologist who is himself a Sri Lankan Tamil, is at pains to refute in his cri de coeur against the ethnic warfare now being waged. In the popular version of the Sinhalese past, the Sri Lankan Tamils figure as invaders of the island. This version is useful to those who pursue the conflict, because it puts the accent on traditional enmity, underpins Sinhalese claims to be

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indigenous, and casts the Sri Lankan Tamils in the role of aliens, despite the fact that on the average they migrated to the island about a thousand years ago.

It is a version of history that is demonstrably false. Through the centuries, the Tamils and the Sinhalese have exchanged words, deities, and genes. Over time the Sinhalese people have had a considerable infusion of Tamil blood at all levels of society. Gooneratne reminds us that the first Bandaranaike was, ironically enough, of Indian origin, as were the Tamil founders of some other aristocratic Sinhalese families, not to mention the Tamil queens of Sinhalese kings as late as the 19th century.

Still, the myth persists. Tambiah goes beyond refuting it. He seems to suggest that if only Sri Lankans knew the truth about their own intermingled past, their ethnic conflict might cease. This is a curious position for an anthropologist. After all, anthropologists have pioneered the study of changing ethnic group boundaries and cultural revivals. They, most of all, have made it clear that the emergence of ethnic conflict does not depend on traditional enmities, that even new groups can come into intense conflict. The fact that there was once a common Sri Lankan-South Indian cultural orbit from which Sinhalese and Tamil cultures emerged—and Tambiah makes a powerful case for it—will not make the current fighting seem foolish to the participants, even if the full history were drummed into their heads.

THE CONFLICT is better understood in terms of developments over the last 30 years. Bandaranaike's attack on his own class was soon overtaken by his attack on the Tamils. Gooneratne does not shrink from pinning this responsibility on her cousin, whom she depicts as pompous and narrow-minded. The first thing Bandaranaike did in 1956 was to push legislation through Parliament making Sinhala the official language and ignoring Tamil. Soon there were anti-Tamil riots. They were followed by much bigger riots in 1958. By then there were two main Sinhalese parties, each claiming to be more pro-Sinhalese than the other, and two Sri Lankan Tamil parties, one of which espoused a federal state designed to secure for Tamils areas in which they would be free from growing discrimination against them. The years from 1956 to 1986 created the conditions in which that Tamil claim, first for non-discrimination and then for a very mild measure of regional autonomy, ripened into an escalating and dangerous civil war.

The escalation was by no means inevitable. The Sri Lanka Tamils are as reluctant a group of secessionists as we are ever likely to see. Hailing from an arid region of the country, the Tamils took readily to missionary education and migrated south to Colombo and to other towns in Sinhalese areas, to take up opportunities as traders, bureaucrats, or professionals. The home areas of the Tamils became dependent on remittances from the sons they exported to other regions. In the south, however, disproportionate Tamil representation in the government and the modern sector of the economy reinforced the Sinhalese sense that the Tamils were so unduly ambitious, diligent, clannish, and avaricious that something had to be done about them. Tambiah is particularly adept in portraying the mutual stereotypes that emerged from the juxtaposition of the two groups.

Discrimination against Tamils in government employment began with the regime of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, but his widow and successor as prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, turned the preference for Sinhalese Buddhists into a fine art. Still, the Tamils remained committed to a united Sri Lanka. Mrs. Bandaranaike returned to power in 1970, after five years in opposition, during which time the Tamils enjoyed a respite from her policies. Upon her return, two crushing blows befell the Tamils. The first was the constitution of 1972, which gave Buddhism a "foremost place" and, in a decisive symbolic rebuff, ignored the Tamil presence in the country. The second was the "standardization of marks," a euphemism for adding points to Sinhalese examination grades, on the pretext that Tamil academic success was attributable to the edge given by Tamil graders to students taking examinations in the Tamil language. It was a policy calculated to appeal to the Sinhalese envy of Tamil achievement and to the stereotype of the Tamils as being more inclined to help each other than are the Sinhalese. Standardization of marks applied at the gateway to university education, and its results were immediately felt in the dramatic declines in Tamil university enrollment. Those Tamils who began to argue in the late 1970s for a violent solution had a half generation of disappointed students to draw upon for recruits.

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Sri Lanka has generally not had a significant Tamil voice in government, and close competition between two main Sinhalese parties has thwarted conciliation. Each Sinhalese party has known that a small swing in votes would produce a large swing in parliamentary seats and usually a change in government. There have almost always been more votes to be had by accusing the government of not doing enough for the Sinhalese than by attempting to propitiate the Tamils. Nearly every Sri Lankan government has considered devolution of authority to the Sri Lankan Tamil areas; and every time the Sinhalese opposition, whatever the party, has opposed it. As the opposition in 1957 railed against S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's first attempt to cool down the ethnic passions he had helped arouse, so Mrs. Bandaranaike today has been campaigning against the essentially federal solution discussed by the government of J. R. Jayewardene with the Tamils. Sri Lanka's two-party competition on the Sinhalese side has made a difficult problem much worse.

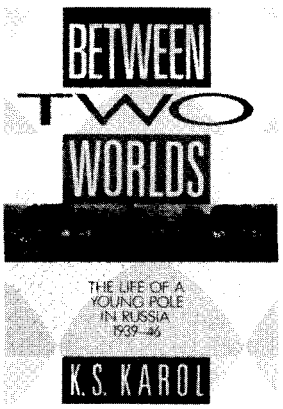
When the present government came to power in 1977, it adopted a number of constitutional changes likely to encourage moderation on ethnic issues and to reduce the ability of the opposition to outbid the government by accusing it of selling out to the Tamils. The constitution established a separately elected president, whose fixed term should be conducive to making difficult and unpopular decisions. New electoral systems for the president and legislature should increase the impact of Tamil votes, even in Sinhalese-majority areas. Some of these changes have not yet been tested, and all of them have come so late that they are up against entrenched violent interests on both sides.

TAMBIAH'S concise volume ably tells the story of the recent violence. He is particularly alert to its disturbing implications for the maintenance of democracy in Sri Lanka. Tambiah documents the excesses of the army, the political interference with the judiciary, and the harsh provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act that was passed in 1979 to fight the separatists. If anything, the violence has grown worse since his book was written. The army has occasionally bombed, strafed, and shelled Tamil civilian areas and killed civilians face-to-face to avenge separatist attacks. The terrorists, in turn, have killed Sinhalese civilians, not merely for revenge but apparently also to frighten them out of the ethnically heterogeneous Eastern Province, which is claimed as part of the Tamil homeland. Kidnappings, first of Tamil youth and now of Sinhalese, have become everyday events as well. The separatists are attempting to set up their own civil administration in the far north. Tambiah is right to think that liberal democracy in Sri Lanka is imperiled, although he is inexplicably harsh on the present regime, and he gives previous governments insufficient credit for bringing the island to its present predicament.

The book is less satisfying in its systematic explanations of the conflict. With greater confidence than is justified by the evidence, for example, Tambiah attempts to link the anti-Tamil riots that triggered the current fighting with economic dislocations that made the Sinhalese urban poor even poorer, and more vulnerable to political manipulation. But Sinhalese mobs were killing Tamils in the 1950s, long before these economic dislocations took place. What is known of urban violence elsewhere suggests that it is by no means the product of economic bad times.

Tambiah makes an eloquent case for pluralist democracy in a country abun-

"Makes Pasternak's *Zhivago* seem like an understatement."*



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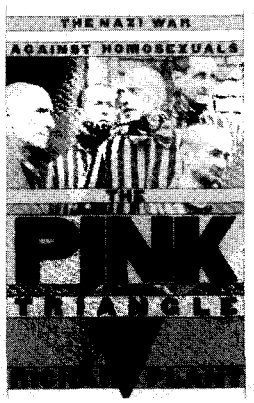

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dantly endowed with excuses to abandon such an approach to politics. "If the West cannot live—cannot survive—except by pluralism," says Tambiah, "neither can the East. This is an enduring truth." It is a truth too rarely heard. There are, however, obstacles on the road to pluralism. India has received large numbers of Tamil refugees and provided training to the guerrillas. With 55 million Tamils of its own, India has every reason to discourage the emergence of a poverty-stricken Sri Lankan Tamil ministate, which would be dependent on India and would complicate India's own ethnic problems. The armed Tamil guerrillas may try to spoil whatever settlement the politicians may finally reach, but Rajiv Gandhi will decide the fate of the guerrillas. As of now, so reluctant are the Sri Lankan Tamils still to opt out of the country—after all, a large fraction of the Tamil population remains in the Sinhalese south—that the main Tamil party, the Tamil United Liberation Front, is willing to settle for something very much short of independence. But if the Sri Lankan government cannot guarantee the security of Tamils in the south, and they have to flee for their lives, the Tamils will fast lose their enthusiasm for a united Sri Lanka. And the Indian government, faced with domestic Tamil pressure every time it cracks down on the separatists, may then have less leeway than it might wish.

The Jayewardene government in Sri Lanka has come a long way toward agreement with the Tamils on a devolution plan that would give the Tamils a measure of real control over the northern and eastern provinces, where most Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated. Mrs. Bandaranaike and an impressive array of Sinhalese Buddhist monks oppose such a plan, contending that it is merely a first step toward a separate Tamil state. This is a common objection to federalism and to plans for regional autonomy in ethnically divided societies. Still, more separatist claims around the world have been placated than have been fueled by devolution. With the Sri Lankan Tamils, there are special ways to ensure that devolution does not ripen into partition. The main disincentives to secession are the dispersion of a group's population outside its home region and the maintenance of abundant opportunities for the group at the center. It may not be palatable to Sinhalese opinion, but the way to keep the Tamil areas attached to Sri Lanka is simultaneously to devolve authority upon the regions and to ensure against discrimination in Colombo and elsewhere in the south. Without Tamils in the south (and sharing power in the central government), Sinhalese fears of secession may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

TAMBIAH'S book is, as he avows, an " 'engaged political tract' rather than a 'distanced academic treatise.' " Mick Moore's study of agricultural politics is at the other end of the spectrum. Moore sets out to answer a single question: Why haven't Sinhalese peasants, politicized though they are, demanded a more favorable price policy from Sri Lankan governments?

In the background to this seemingly parochial question lies a widespread pattern of inefficient agricultural policies in Asia and Africa. Export crops such as cocoa and coffee are bought by state agencies at fixed prices and then resold at higher world prices. The price difference constitutes a tax that often accounts for a considerable part of a country's revenue. Likewise, the producer price of food crops, such as rice and wheat, is kept artificially low, not so much to tax as to subsidize the price of food for domestic consumers. In many countries, consumer subsidies of food and other essential commodities have risen alarmingly since independence. In Egypt, for example, subsidies increased 20-fold from 1960 to 1985. Food subsidies in particular are regarded as a form of bribery for the political quiescence of the growing urban masses in developing countries, where attempts to reduce subsidies have frequently met with violent protest.

The taxation of export crops makes production of such valuable crops less attractive, and it inclines producers to find ways around the official system of distribution. In Ghana, the smuggling of cocoa out of the country to points where it could fetch a fair market price seriously hurt an economy that ought to have been well-positioned for development.

Depressing food prices reduces food production. Countries that might be self-sufficient in food have remained food importers. Governments have generally feared using price incentives to encourage production. Instead, they have given out seed, fertilizer, low-interest loans, and land. As Robert Bates, a leading student of this subject, has pointed out, all of these inputs are more readily targeted at political supporters, and withheld from political opponents, than are the indivisible benefits of higher market prices.

In Sri Lanka, as in other countries, the twin goals of agricultural price policy have been revenue extraction and cheap food. The export crops—tea, rubber, and coconuts—are taxed heavily. Export taxes support Sri Lanka's extensive welfare schemes, including food subsidies that cost the government nearly a quarter of its total revenue before they were reduced in 1979. Rice, the main food crop, brings a producer price below the world market price, keeping consumer prices down. On the other hand, rice producers have benefited handsomely from distribution of state land as well as from sub-

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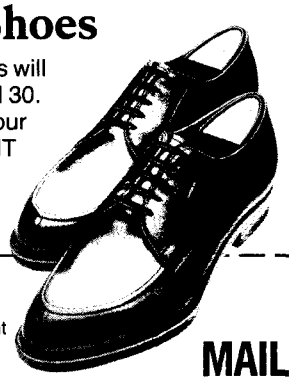

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sidies on fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, tractor services, credit, and seed. The distribution of land, loans, and services has been skewed toward the political supporters of those who do the distributing.

Unlike many other countries, however, Sri Lanka has had competitive elections since independence, with parties alternating in office. Many such elections have been decided by voters in the heart of the rice surplus area. So the riddle is to explain why peasant producers (especially of rice) have not conditioned their support on a better price deal. Having framed this question, Moore goes on to answer it relentlessly. His knowledge of Sri Lankan agriculture and politics is admirably detailed and subtle.

MOORE COMES down on an array of interlocking conditions to explain peasant price acquiescence. The smallholder community is not homogeneous; it has different interests depending on crop and regional location. Governmental bodies are organized to deal with peasants on a crop by crop basis, further fragmenting peasant interests. The Sinhalese caste and tenancy systems have not been so oppressive as to trigger peasant political mobilization. Traditionally, the Sinhalese peasantry has not seen itself as having interests opposed to urban interests. Moreover, there has been little attempt to force food deliveries in times of shortage or to impose direct taxes on smallholders that would generate resistance followed by more general political mobilization. The main peasant issue has been the distribution of state resources, especially land. The peasantry has thus been integrated into the overall Sri Lankan welfare system. Governments have been generous with land, and land is an issue concerning which each farmer must stake his own claim and make his own political contacts—it is an individual issue, not a policy issue. Finally, because many of the largest rice producers are not Sinhalese but Tamil or Moslem, ethnic conflict deprives the peasantry of those who could have led the fight on price policy most effectively.

Moore makes each of these arguments with great skill—even with too much skill, because it begins to look as if almost everything in the Sri Lankan political, social, and economic environment can be made to point in the same direction: no peasant pressure for higher prices. If everything proves the point, maybe there is no point to prove. In the end, this may be the case, because some of the reasons adduced for peasant quiescence really indicate that the peasantry, as Moore says, "has not been subject to naked exploitation through state action. The state has in large part fulfilled its claim to be the guardian of the peasant interest." It has done this by distributing quite a lot in subsidies, which inure disproportionately to that politically most important category of food producer, the rice farmer. To be sure, farmers producing a surplus would be better off with higher prices and fewer subsidized inputs, but not so much better off. Rice prices, though still below the world market, have been steadily increasing. In short, things could have been much worse for food producers; and if they had become worse, there might have been a political movement addressed to prices. In keeping food prices low, some countries take greater advantage of their peasant food producers than Sri Lanka does.

In any case, producer price pressure has rarely been as effective in the developing world as consumer resistance to high prices. So, by choosing instead to collect their subsidies, Sinhalese peasants have not been ignoring their own interests, despite the cynical crack of a welfare-weary former prime minister that Sri Lankans "will accept anything, even a headache, if it is free."

The headache that Sri Lankans seem unduly willing to accept is not the subsidy system, with its high costs. The Jayewardene government has managed to tackle it, despite urban opposition; in reducing the expense of food subsidies by more than half, Sri Lanka has accomplished what many developing countries have not been able to do. The headache that will not go away is warfare, not welfare. It is the ethnic conflict that threatens to become, quite literally, a splitting headache. Sri Lanka has simply not done as well at the management of conflict as some other countries (such as Malaysia) that began with worse ethnic problems but then took steps toward interethnic coalition and compromise. Ethnic conflict is not just a matter of raw hostility, or false views of history, or economic conditions. Like agricultural policy, its outcomes depend on how political institutions are structured, and on what decisions they are able to make. The problems of countries like Sri Lanka are difficult, but they are not altogether beyond human inventiveness.

DONALD L. HOROWITZ

Donald L. Horowitz is professor of law and political science at Duke University. He is the author of *Coup Theories and Officers' Motives: Sri Lanka in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton University Press) and, most recently, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of California Press).

AUSSIE ODDITIES

The Well
by Elizabeth Jolley

(Viking, 176 pp., $14.95)

Elizabeth Jolley was born in the industrial midlands of England, and in 1959 moved with her husband and three children to Western Australia, the unforgiving landscape in which her characters move. "Outside the night was dark. She could hear the wind rushing. She imagined the lonely blackness of the wheat paddocks and the wind tearing across searching out the blank corners. It was strange to be in a place where there was no ocean and no stream." Like Miss Alma Porch in these sentences from *Foxybaby*, Jolley's characters attempt to endure, but they seldom prevail—especially since they have an unillusioned author who deals out embarrassments and humiliations to them. Jolley has been compared to Muriel Spark in the fierceness with which her grim view of the world catches up its hapless inhabitants and puts them through the wringer. Yet a vein of fantasy, and even on occasion something like plain silliness (why would anybody title a novel *Foxybaby*?), make her something more interesting than just another female satirist. And her most recent novel,

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The Well, is a gripping, quite original fiction.

Nothing in Jolley's previous work prepares one for *The Well*. Its immediate predecessor, *Milk and Honey*, is notable mainly for an air of contrived weirdness. A "sick" or gothic tale of a young man's sojourn with a creepy Viennese family, it is both humorless and eccentric, made memorable only by the presence in it of an idiot son named Waldemar who likes to eat pickled cucumbers dipped in honey. As a whole, *Milk and Honey* exudes a similarly rebarbative atmosphere, portentous rather than comic in its effect.

Jolley's comedy shows to much better advantage in *Foxybaby*, where an unlikely "creative" playwright named Alma Porch (she bills herself "tutor and writer") accepts a teaching position (if such it can be called) at an extremely dubious school named Trinity College, located in a place called Cheathem East, out there in the Australian wheat. The school is somewhat comparable to Evelyn Waugh's Llanabba Castle in *Decline and Fall*, except that its inhabitants are older women keenly interested in creativity; thus Miss Porch is hired to supervise a production of her unfinished play, "Foxybaby." Trinity is presided over by a daffy head named Miss Peycroft, who, upon first meeting Alma Porch, provides her with some practical literary criticism:

> I think the students will rise to it. . . . It all depends on how you present the treatment of the story. The storyline's the thing. Give that well and it'll succeed. I like very much . . . your idea of the elderly man and the young girl and a baby holed up, as it were, in a dreary motel unit. Also, *a propos* the scene of desolate passion between the two prison officers, I noticed while dealing in detail with women you don't attempt to, how shall I put it, explore male homosexual relationships?

Before modest Miss Porch is able to reply, her superior continues "in a low-voiced earnestness": "I believe, with men, some kind of explosion takes place. Might be worth looking into some day."

Foxybaby is a comic fantasy with some very funny moments, especially where Miss Peycroft is concerned ("Can you imagine the downright absolute frustration of not being able to play the cello and the double bass—at once, I mean simultaneously?"). But eventually it feels strained, the joke about the play and the school having exhausted itself. On the basis of *Foxybaby* I decided that Elizabeth Jolley was a "sport," one of those eccentric women novelists (another one currently enjoying popularity is Angela Carter) that England used to be full of, and perhaps still is. This judgment wasn't seriously challenged by a new collection of her stories, *Women in a Lampshade*, in which there is plenty of fantasy, plenty of cuteness, and one story, "Adam's Bride," that reads like a fierce anti-pastoral concocted by somebody who had read Flannery O'Connor and decided to write an account of her prize human specimens, but without O'Connor's humor. Most of the 17 stories seemed wispy and forgettable, pieces one would never reread.

THE WELL, by contrast, is a considerable achievement, a book that improves with rereading. Once again we're in wheat country, "a place where the endless black paddocks merged with the endless black sky"—Western Australia as the ultimate mythical landscape. And as always in Jolley's fiction, the human figure standing out against that landscape is lonely and vulnerable, this one particularly so in her sexual isolation and physical deformity. Hester Harper, whose lame leg requires her to walk by awkwardly leaning on a stick and who suffers from frequent extended bouts of migraine, lives with her father on a large isolated farm managed more or less by herself. Hester is thin and unattractive, her emotional life mainly a matter of recalling—from her childhood in Europe—an intense love for a young woman servant of the family's named Hilde Herzfeld (the shared initials are an added bond).

Hilde cherished Hester until, abruptly, the servant had to leave the household—an affair with Hester's father is suggested—and Hester was sent away to boarding school. The European background and the lesbian attachment, if one wishes to call it that, crop up elsewhere in Jolley's work; but here the important result is Hester's loneliness and vulnerability—until she takes in a young woman from the orphanage named Katherine to live with them at the farm. When Hester's father dies she and Katherine continue to live together, renting out the big house and moving into a smaller stone cottage on the property.

The pages describing Hester and Katherine's life together are perfectly done, as suddenly the "black moonless nights in the wheat" are made cozy and delightful. The two women share the pleasures of cooking, gardening, buying new clothes, brushing each other's hair, and attending American films. Katherine adores John Travolta and picks up an American accent (encouraged in her by Hester), with much use of "trewly" and "reely." There are good, establishing touches made through details of the food they prepare and eat: the bacon and fried bread Katherine brings Hester in bed after a late night at the movies; the "piquant orange and plum sauces" they make for their roast duckling; jacket potatoes roasted and then soaked in butter; salads with thinly sliced avocado pears, crushed garlic, and black olives. Most original of all, "They developed too the habit of having a glass of champagne each with their sodden cornflakes at breakfast." When pans or dishes are deemed too greasy to wash, they carry them outside and dump them into an abandoned well located on the premises. This well is also a pleasant place to sit and sun during the daytime. It works as an all-purpose receptacle, in sum, and its symbolic properties gradually emerge.

Jolley renders the mutual dependence of Hester and Katherine with creative sympathy, the emphasis being on the intensity of the older woman's need for the relationship and her fears that some-

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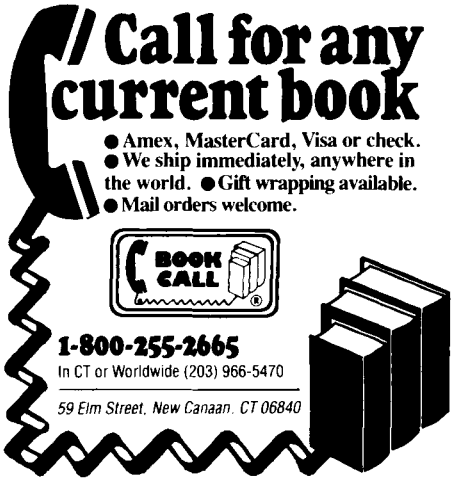
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one will come along to disrupt it. Those fears are directed first at Katherine's friend from the orphanage, Joanna, who is invited to visit. Having told Katherine about her precious childhood memories of Hilde Herzfeld, Hester now imagines Katherine writing to Joanna in her jazzy, with-it voice, and profaning those memories by juxtaposing them with one of Katherine's—a day at the orphanage when she and Joanna discovered two nuns together on a mattress:

> The Herzfeld chick, a TV soapy if you ask me. Big Trouble, like Sister Violetta at the Home d'ya reckon? Joanna-panna Jeez. Squeeze. Huh! eh? Makepeace and whasaname on the shed floor. Remember? Shit! Yuk! I don't hack it, but. Like Hell she musta gone for the Herzy chick. When she talks it's like On Golden Pond her eyes all clouded like as if these little veils of sadness

THE HEARTS

The legendary muscle that wants and grieves,
The organ of attachment, the pump of thrills
And troubles, clinging in stubborn colonies

Like pulpy shore-life battened on a jetty.
Slashed by the little deaths of sleep and pleasure,
They swell in the nurturing spasms of the waves,

Sucking to cling; and even in death itself—
Baked, frozen—they shrink to grip the granite harder.
"Rid yourself of attachments and aversions"—

But in her father's orchard, already, he says
He'd like to be her bird, and she says: Sweet, yes,
Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing,

Showing that she knows already—as Art Pepper,
That first time he takes heroin, already knows
That he will go to prison, and knows he'll suffer

And says, he needs to have it or die; and the one
Who makes the General lose the world for love
Lets him say, *would I had never seen her*, but Oh!

Says Enobarbus, Then you would have missed
A wonderful piece of work, which left unseen
Would bring less glory to your travels. Among

The creatures in the rock-torn surf, a wave
Of agitation, a gasp. A scholar quips,
Shakespeare was almost certainly homosexual,

Bisexual, or heterosexual, the sonnets
Provide no evidence on the matter. He writes
Romeo an extravagant speech on tears,

In the Italian manner, his teardrops cover
His chamber window, says the boy, he calls them crystals,
Inanely, and sings them to Juliet with his heart:

The almost certainly invented heart
Which Buddha denounces, in its endless changes
Forever jumping and moving, like an ape.

Over the poor beast's head the crystal fountain
Crashes illusions, the cold salt spume of pain
And meaningless distinction, as Buddha says,

But here in the crystal shower mouths are open
To sing, it is Lee Andrews and The Hearts
In 1957, singing *I sit in my room*

Looking out at the rain, My teardrops are
Like crystals, they cover my windowpane, the turns
Of these illusions we make become their glory:

To Buddha every distinct thing is illusion
And becoming is destruction, but still we sing
In the shower. I do. In the beginning God drenched

The Emptiness with images: the potter
Crosslegged at his wheel in Benares market
Making mud cups, another cup each second

Tapering up between his fingers, one more
To sell the tea-seller at a penny a dozen,
And tea a penny a cup. The customers smash

The empties, and waves of traffic grind the shards
To mud for new cups, in turn; and I keep one here
Next to me: holding it a while from out of the cloud

Of dust that rises from the shattered pieces,
The risen dust alive with fire, then settled
And soaked and whirling again on the wheel that turns

And looks on the world as on another cloud,
On everything the heart can grasp and throw away
As a passing cloud, with even Enlightenment

Itself another image, another cloud
To break and churn a salt foam over the heart
Like an anemone that sucks at clouds and makes

Itself with clouds and sings in clouds and covers
Its windowpane with clouds that blur and melt,
Until one clings and holds—as once in the Temple

In the time before the Temple was destroyed
A young priest saw the seraphim of the Lord:
Each had six wings, with two they covered their faces,

With two they covered their legs and feet, with two
They darted and hovered like dragonflies or perched
Like griffins in the shadows near the ceiling—

These are the visions, too barbarous for heaven
And too preposterous for belief on earth,
God sends to taunt his prophet with the truth

No one can see, that leads to who knows where.
A seraph took a live coal from the altar
And seared the prophet's lips, and so he spoke.

As the record ends, a coda in retard:
The Hearts in a shifting velvety *ah*, and *ah*
Prolonged again, and again as Lee Andrews

Reaches *ah* high for *I have to gain Faith, Hope*
And Charity, God only knows the girl
Who will love me—Oh! if we only could

Start over again! Then The Hearts chant the chords
Again a final time, *ah* and the record turns
Through all the music, and on into silence again.

ROBERT PINSKY

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come down. Wowie! Real goolish eh? Embarrassing?

The disturbing vulgarity of this is finely rendered, an indication that (as in conversations between Misses Porch and Peycroft in *Foxybaby*) Jolley has a sharply ironic eye, here directed at the apprehensions of guilty conscience, as well as an equally sharp command of a language in which to express them.

The novel's mixture of pathos and irony culminates in a large party attended by Hester and Katherine, in which Hester is made to feel both her superfluousness and the selfishness of her desire to keep tight control of Katherine. Everything builds up to the disaster she has been anticipating in her worst thoughts: on the way home from the dance Katherine (who is just learning to drive), giddy from the evening's pleasure, hits something on the road, presumably a man—although the "something" is not specified. Katherine is distraught but Hester takes command, ordering the younger woman to drive slowly, with the "something" caught on the front bar (called a "roo bar") of the Toyota, to the convenient well, into which with some difficulty the burden is dropped.

This fierce "solution" to their problem solves nothing, of course, but rather incites deeper trouble as, returning to the house, Hester finds her savings (kept in a woolen sock) have disappeared. Presumably they are now down the well with the thief, and Hester insists that Katherine lower herself into the well to retrieve the money. But Katherine is convinced not only that there is a man in the well, but that he is alive, indeed alternately calling to them for help and threatening vengeance if they don't provide it. She has fantasies of marrying him, thus confirming in the most grotesque manner Hester's earlier fears. With mordant appropriateness, food comes back into the book as (so Katherine reports) the man demands not only something to eat, but oysters and a fresh salad since his gums are sore (perhaps this is the sovereign remedy for Australian sore gums?). More and more the well takes on qualities of an enchanted place, as Hester embroiders the scene:

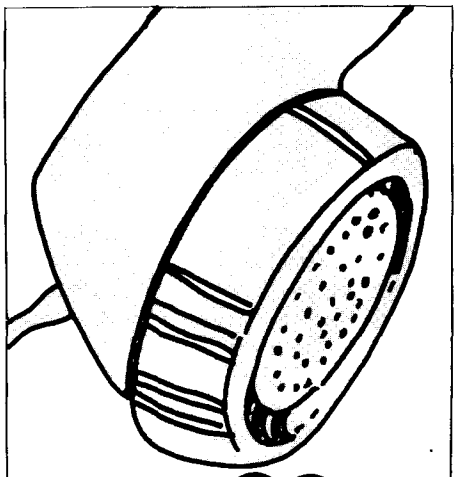
> She thought of the well and what it might be like down there on an underground bank of earth and crumbled rock. Dark and damp. . . . In ordinary circumstances there was a fairy-tale enchantment about the idea of secret streams and caves beneath the ordinary world of wheat paddocks, roads and towns. The streams could trickle through crevices in the rocks and flow more swiftly in channels and even through tunnels in some places. In the rocks themselves there would be faces of dwarfs and other fairyland creatures, there would be battlements and turrets of silent castles and little steps and slides leading from one cavern to another.

Dead though he must surely be (though Hester now begins to be unsure even of that) the man—or whatever "it" is—becomes fully alive in her imagination, serving as the catalyst that brings back in their full painful richness her memories from out of the well of childhood. Meanwhile a heavy rain falls and continues to fall as the two women sit in the kitchen, exhausted, arguing bitterly about whether or not to go out and rescue their visitor from his extraordinary prison. Fact and fantasy have become indistinguishable, and to the reader as well as to the characters.

THE WELL reminded me of D. H. Lawrence, another writer who was fascinated by Australia. The Hester-Katherine relationship, suddenly threatened by the coming of an other, recalls Banford's struggle in *The Fox* to keep her beloved March from marrying the stranger who shows up one day. And Hester's struggle with the farm brings to mind that of the unnamed New England woman with the New Mexican landscape at the end of *St. Mawr*. When Jolley writes about rain drumming on the roof, or about grass growing fragrant in the meadow, or about wind blowing across the land, and as she moves Hester into memories of childhood, of her father and his stories about the red fox that haunts not only hers but evidently Jolley's consciousness as well (why else *Foxybaby*?), the novel feels like what Leavis said Lawrence's *The Rainbow* was—a "dramatic poem." Some such phrase may suggest the thickness of atmosphere, texture, nuance, and implication in this original tale by a writer new to most of us.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

William H. Pritchard is Henry Clay Folger Professor of English at Amherst College and the author most recently of *Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered* (Oxford University Press).



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Dear Editor, Dear Reader

WHEN I FIRST came to TNR in 1974, my secretary Gwen Somers alerted me to the ordinariness of the "cancel my subscription" letter. Early on my watch, the Communist historian Herbert Aptheker canceled because we ran a report on the Soviet arms buildup. He didn't deny the buildup, but worried about fueling the cold war from the American side. I've read hundreds of such "Dear John" letters since. Some readers have abandoned us recently because TRB doesn't see the farm problem quite as Jessica Lange does. One couldn't countenance our "stubborn" use of gender-specific pronouns. Our most noted canceler in 1986 was Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, who claimed that our article on the money trail from the White House basement to *contra* bases on the Nicaragua border was false. That was a few weeks before the Iranamok scandal broke, after which everyone knew that the story was true. Abrams has not yet re-subscribed.

AFTER WE PRINTED an article about Elie Wiesel's campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize, some of his constituents rushed to cancel their subscriptions. Apparently there is nothing Wiesel might do that could faze his admirers—not even using his authority as tribune of the six million to counsel, as Alfred Kazin reported, "Jewish voters in Florida to support Reagan's favorite candidate," Paula Hawkins for U.S. senator. And out of what moral urgency? The same drive that led him to throw out the first ball at a World Series game. This is a man who can't say no. As a Yiddish saying has it, "He has to dance at all the weddings." Sometimes, however, he leaves before the cake. Having initiated the permanent Holocaust extravaganza to be built on the Smithsonian mall, he has now quit. It's not clear whether because of personal differences with other museum supporters or because, as one of his lieutenants solemnly asserted, "The holiness has been taken out of the project." Now he's given a pompously titled address on "the state of World Jewry," bemoaning unprecedented disunity in Jewish ranks. Who can be against unity? But those who sow dissension most also want unity—on their terms, the perfervid ultraorthodox not less than militant non-believers. There is no way to have them come to terms. In any case, disunity is not new in Jewish history. It started with the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael, which was followed by that of Jacob and Esau, followed by Joseph's difficulties with his brothers. A larger fratricide during the exodus can be read about—well, in Exodus. Then there were the two Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Bitterness marked the relations between those who stayed in the Babylonian exile and those who returned. After that came the pitched ideological battles between the "loyalists" and the Hellenizers. And so on. The truth is that only once did unity characterize Jewish history, when there was just one Jew, Abraham. Wiesel knows this. But celebrities are not celebrated for complex views. They are honored for the serviceable banality. Or as Kazin wrote, "Out of the ashes had sprung a phenomenal career."

DESPITE WHAT YOU'VE read in these pages, George Will is one of the country's most original and independent columnists. Certainly he is the one conservative columnist to have articulated a normative conservative critique of Reaganism, and better a Burkean conservative critique than no conservative critique at all. Will is not a party man, a rarity in the right-wing encampment among whom a discipline close to Stalinist is ordinarily expected. Like others on the right, Will is very much against abortions, but that has not kept him from taking on the country's chief pro-life enforcer, Cardinal O'Connor, on other matters. Will's devastating historical and legal analysis of O'Connor's (and the Vatican's) theological reluctance to come to terms with the reality of Israel's existence has now twice provoked William F. Buckley Jr. into a crude and casuistic defense of the irreconcilables. Cardinal O'Connor, he wrote in his syndicated column, had "declined to be circumcised into Israeli dogma." He went on to misstate the issue so systematically that his abundant ignorance of the Middle East cannot suffice as explanation. The old Catholic right has always had trouble with the Jewish problem. This explains why Buckley has made things so cozy for an unabashed bigot like columnist Joseph Sobran. It's also why Will's friendship for Israel is so offensive to Buckley, who, after all, is still defending Pius XII.

I ADMIT IT: I do think Jeane Kirkpatrick was right when she said there were leading Democrats whose reflex is to "blame America first." Two recent instances: Massachusetts Democratic Congressman Chester Atkins complained (rightly) that we were not giving enough aid to Cambodian refugees. But he went on to say that U.S. policy was the cause of the Cambodian genocide. This flies in the face of the incontrovertible evidence that the Khmer Rouge, enthusiasts of the armed doctrine of transformatory communism, had embarked on a systematic policy of destroying root and branch the old society so as to be able to build a new one. Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd has belatedly acknowledged that what Sandinismo means in Nicaragua today is dictatorship, militarism, and subservience to Moscow. This is not the result, he insists on faith, of the revolutionary designs of the Sandinistas, but of Reagan's policy. However haplessly, that policy did aim to protect Nicaraguans from the *comandantes*, much as Kissinger's aimed to protect Cambodia from Pol Pot. What's so striking about Atkins and Dodd is their impoverished imaginations when it comes to revolutionaries' capacity for evil. But that imagination is positively lurid when it fixes on the United States.

THE NATION, the weekly publication of the fellow-traveling remnants, has been owned for about a year by Arthur Carter, a Wall Street zillionaire, who first tried to buy TNR and God only knows what else. Up to now, he has kept his political views to himself. Certainly he can take no philosophical pleasure in the *Nation*'s deficits. Perhaps to compensate for his losses, he has also yet to eliminate the plaintively tacky weekly imprecation, "When drafting your will, please consider making a bequest to the *Nation*." There may still be some self-styled progressives who'd subsidize a tycoon like Carter just to keep alive the illusion of peaceable old Joe Stalin. Dear Reader, Please do not consider making a bequest to THE NEW REPUBLIC. If you pay your bills promptly, you're already paying your share of the freight.

M. P.

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Issues of the Information Age:

PROMISES KEPT, PROMISES TO KEEP.

At the beginning of this century, Theodore N. Vail, president of AT&T, understood his competition not just as other telephone companies, but as distance, loneliness, separation. He foresaw that the success of his company could end the geographic isolation of man. And in ending that isolation, the company's success would be assured. The vision became reality: by the mid-'70s, America had universal telephone service.

Today, as the Information Age has begun, there is a new kind of isolation. People are awash in a mounting sea of information, yet unable to connect or work with information in an orderly, useful form; that is, with the world's knowledge. Often, information machines do little to help. They are difficult to use, rigid in their demands, generally unable to work with any but their own kind.

To overcome this new kind of isolation, we have a new vision: to make the Information Age universal, to help build a worldwide Telecommunity, not just open to all, but inviting.

At AT&T, we are now working toward the day when people around the world will be able to handle information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they make a phone call today. And they will be able to get information in a form they can use, whenever they need it, from wherever it is.

We envision a vast global network of networks, the merging of communications and computers, linking devices so incredibly capable, they will bend to the will of human beings, rather than forcing humans to bend to theirs.

Obviously, no one company, no one nation, can universalize the Information Age. It will take the best minds of many companies and many nations. The needs of our customers are creating imperatives for our industry. We need common standards and compatibility. We need national and international policies that are open and encouraging. And we need to make information machines far easier to use.

We have the science to construct the systems now. The technology is rapidly taking shape.

We are dedicating our minds, our energy, our resources—our future—to making Telecommunity a reality. To bringing the best of the Information Age to the world.

Our vision has its roots in AT&T's heritage of service. Just as the telephone extended the reach of the human voice, Telecommunity will extend the reach and capability of minds and talents.

Telecommunity is our goal. Technology is our means.℠

We're committed to leading the way.

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